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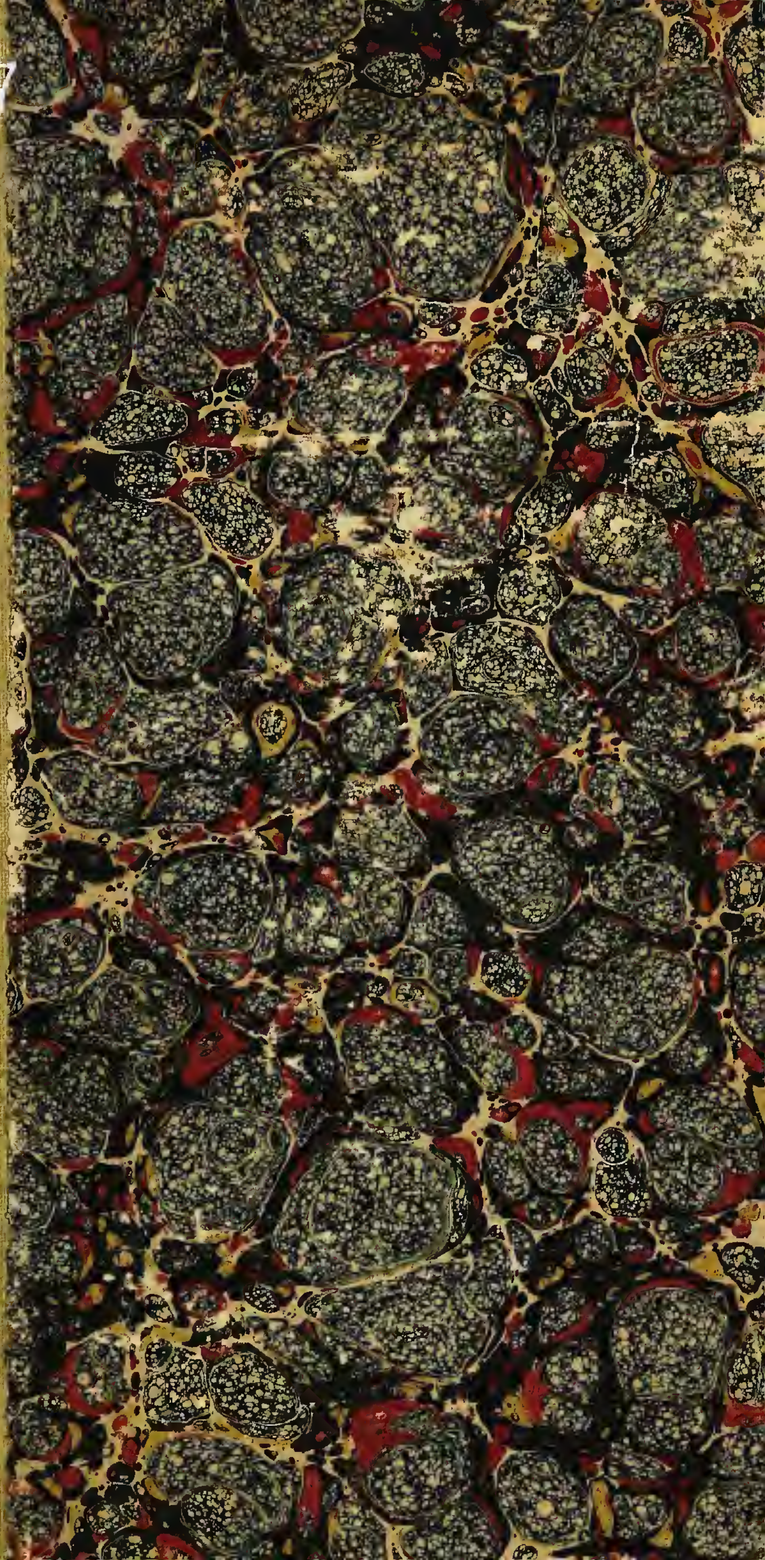

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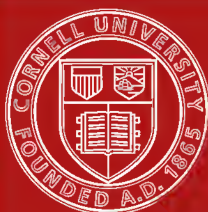

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THE PROSE POETRY

OF

THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

INAUGURAL-DISSERTATION

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PREFACE.

For mastery of style perhaps no English writer ever received more general praise than Thomas De Quincey. But, in spite of his fortune in this respect, and notwithstanding the fame of his versatility as a man of letters, he has met, strange to say, neither in his own country nor in America with much criticism of a more searching sort. In France, although De Musset himself early paraphrased *The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, Taine, it seems, never heard of De Quincey, — as it happens, a real sign of widespread negligence in the world of criticism. Germany possesses portions of our author's writings in translation, but to any problems of his life and activity, this land, so notable otherwise for its thoroughgoing interest in English letters, has failed to give practical attention; a thing all the more remarkable when one considers the part that De Quincey played, with Coleridge, Carlyle and others, in popularising German literature for England in the early part of the nineteenth century.

His participation in this movement involves but one of many questions about our author that invite investigation. What, for instance, was his exact relation to the Lake School? How is he to be classed among the novelists? How did he bear himself toward Rousseau and the principles of the French Revolution? — Or, for a more particular example, in how far is he to be compared with Wordsworth as a poet of childhood? Preliminary, however, to all other problems is a proper interpretation of the man himself in and through his own writings. And, with sufficient diffidence, yet with that right to judge which is gained by a careful progress through the literature concerned, the present writer permits himself to think that De Quincey has not been in all respects clearly understood, and that the following pages may throw some light upon his mental make-up and the nature of his literary productions.

In order to centralize the treatment, definite portions of our author's writings have been chosen for special study, and, still further, as a sort of pivot about which the rest may revolve, we have selected the third section of *The English Mail-Coach*, known as *Dream Fugue*. Such procedure will, it is hoped, best present the results of our investigation.

The standard biography of De Quincey at present is that by A. H. Japp ("H. A. Page"), and the best edition of his writings is D. Masson's. This latter work has served as basis for text-references, and as source for many dates and facts employed in the following dissertation. Two volumes of *Memorials*, by Japp, and an annotated edition of the *Confessions*, by R. Garnett, have likewise proved of use. Other sources drawn on incidentally are noticed in their respective connections, with references to the *bibliography* which is placed at the close of the dissertation.

This bibliography is offered for the advantage of future De Quincey students. It contains, in addition to all the writings of our author himself, as far as possible all that has been published concerning him; and only some fugitive editions of selections from his works, without editorial prefaces or comments, are purposely omitted. Four instances of books or periodicals which it was impossible to obtain personally, the writer has marked in the bibliography with stars. Volume XIV of Masson's edition contains a chronological list of De Quincey's writings as they originally appeared in periodicals; this it has seemed not advantageous to repeat.

In the following pages references to De Quincey's works (bibl. 1) are usually made simply to volume and page, — occasionally to line (l). Masson's prefaces and notes are indicated by *M*. By *L* is meant Japp's *Life* (bibl. 2). Finally, cross-references in the dissertation itself are denoted by *D*.

By permission of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Leipzig, this dissertation, originally presented in German, is herewith published in English.

I.

INTRODUCTION.

Classification of De Quincey's Writings; — the Prose Poetry.

How far from simple the classification of De Quincey's multifarious writings has proved, whether for editing or for purposes of criticism, is apparent at the outset. It may be readily seen in following our author's own efforts at arrangement in his personally supervised edition begun in 1853. Or it may be observed again in a passage in the first edition of his life, where his biographer suggests that the various papers of our versatile stylist "might be divided into historical, biographical, critical, political, and miscellaneous."[1] — In the last-named, indefinite class would have to be included, among others, certain writings which, as we shall learn, De Quincey considered as belonging very definitely by themselves, and as the acme of his production. The difficulty in question may still be traced in Masson's generally successful grouping of the collected works.[2]

In his preface of 1853 our author attempts to make in all three divisions of his entire writings, and names first "that class which proposes to amuse the reader", in which, however, "At times the narrative rises to a far higher key".[3] He says, then: "Into the second class I throw those papers which address themselves

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[1] *L.* II. 237 (bibl. 2).
[2] cf. I. 51, *M*; Hodgson: *Outcast Essays*, 25 ff. (bibl. 34).
[3] I. 9.

purely to the understanding . . . .; or do so primarily. Let me call them by the general name of ESSAYS[1]. . . . . Finally, as a third class, and, in virtue of their aim, as a far higher class of compositions . . ., I rank *The Confessions of an Opium-Eater*, and also (but more emphatically) the *Suspiria de Profundis*. On these, as modes of impassioned prose ranging under no precedents that I am aware of in any literature, it is much more difficult to speak justly, whether in a hostile or a friendly character. . . At present I feel authorised to make haughtier pretensions in right of their *conception* than I shall venture to do, under the peril of being supposed to characterise their *execution*. . . . I desire him", (the reader), "to consider the utter sterility of universal literature in this one department of impassioned prose".[2]

It may be that De Quincey's meaning, as Masson suggests,[3] is not perfectly clear in some of these latter clauses; but it is evident enough that our author viewed certain portions of his writings as separate, and as the best of his work, — a matter wherein he was entitled to judge, — and even as a rare, perhaps unexampled kind of production in the world's literature. In the latter supposition we must deem him somewhat rash.[4] That he did not hold the entire body of the *Confessions* worthy of standing in this class of high excellence may be drawn from more than one passage in his works. "By accident", he says in one place, "a considerable part of the Confessions (all, in short, except the Dreams) had originally been written hastily."[5] Elsewhere he lays further emphasis upon "those pompous dreams and dream-sceneries, which were in reality the true objects — first and last — contemplated in these Confessions."[6] And once more: "The final object

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[1] I. 10.
[2] I. 14.
[3] XIII. 5. *M*; cf. Minto, p. 66 (bibl. 10).
[4] cf. L. Stephen, Fortnightly Rev. 15: 311 (bibl. 81).
[5] III. 219. Pref. notice to first Collected Ed.
[6] III. 233.

of the whole record lay in the dreams. For the sake of those the entire narrative," i. e., of the *Confessions,* "arose".[1] As one sees, then, most of this work consists of mere narrative, written hurriedly in the first instance; the important part, the amount of "impassioned prose ranging under no precedents" is relatively small. What De Quincey had intended to present in the *Confessions* is another question. The accidental burning of some and mysterious disappearance of others of the "twenty-five dreams and noon-day visions", which he had relied upon as a 'crowning grace, reserved for the final pages', are greatly to be deplored. Some of the papers concerned he hoped to recover, so he says, but the only one of which positive trace remains is *The Daughter of Lebanon.* This was burned partially, "but not so burned as to be absolutely irretrievable",[2] and was first printed in 1856 at the end of the revised edition of the *Confessions.*

It would be out of purpose here to pursue De Quincey through the various shiftings to which he subjected his papers in revision, as now one minor reason, now another, prompted him, in the progress of his work, to deviate in practice from the principles of arrangement which he proposed theoretically for his writings.[3] One may try rather to learn what sort of system *can* be applied, especially as regards the productions at present particularly considered, and to discover in how far our author's ideas are justified with reference to these. De Quincey's triple division, noted above, was based upon a dual classification which he offered for all written productions whatsoever. A well-known passage in his works reads: "All that is literature seeks to communicate power; all that is not literature, to communicate knowledge".[4] This general thought is contained also in a passage possibly less familiar, where we find the ages of Pericles and Alexander contrasted

[1] III. 413.
[2] III. 221-2.
[3] cf. XIII. 332 *M.*
[4] X. 48. cf. Hodgson, *Outcast Essays,* 21 ff. (bibl. 34).

as regards literary activity, and are informed that "The first age furnished the power; the second furnished the science."[1] Parallel to these citations, although at first sight slightly opposing the principle of separation upheld in them, is the exclamation in *False Distinctions*, "What a world of delusion ..... lies in the hollow distinction of *Reason* and *Imagination*",[2] — a hard saying, which is softened and explained when the author stigmatises, a little later in the same paper, the "error ..... that the understanding and the imaginative faculty exist in insulation — neither borrowing nor lending; that they are strong at the expense of each other."[3] Finally, toward the end of the essay on *Rhetoric*, to some sentences wherein he implies that he was more familiar than Whately with what had been written concerning the basal difference between poetry and prose, our author appends one of his customary notes, and in this are the words: "Some have imagined that the proper opposition was between poetry and science."[4]

It is characteristic enough of De Quincey that he should state his own belief thus incidentally and hesitatingly. Our author's articles on *Rhetoric* and *Style* contain very little of an elaborate theory of criticism; only by comparison of hints and fragmentary utterances scattered throughout his works can his literary creed be ascertained.[5] De Quincey believed that in literature in its very widest sense there were two poles, representing two main tendencies; one tendency more subjective, proceeding from the individual and directed toward the individual sensibilities; the other addressed to the understanding, — "as an insulated faculty",[6] he says, — then saves himself perhaps from inconsistency by adding, 'or at least primarily.'[7] Of his own works,

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[1] X. 216; cf. Amer. Ed. of 1851, etc. X. No. V, *Pope.*
[2] X. 440
[3] X. 444; cf. X. 445.
[4] X. 131. note.
[5] cf. XII. 446, X. 131.
[6] cf. X. 229; I. 10.
[7] cf. *D.* 8.

accordingly, he makes those three classes named above, the first of which lies, so to speak, midway between the two poles, and exhibits neither tendency in a marked degree: partly objective, historical, scientific in a sense, the writings of this order are also imaginative to some extent. The second is of a more rigorous nature, is definitely offered to the understanding, and possesses in a certain way a purer value than the first; although it is by no means the loftiest kind of production, and, if we push De Quincey to extremes, actually not literature as such, but that sort of colorless connected discourse which directly communicates knowledge. Finally, there is a third class, addressed to the faculty of imagination, consisting of "impassioned prose", and claiming the highest rank among all his productions, a body of writing small in compass and scattered, which, however, the author was at times minded to collect, to increase, to organise into one. This dream was not fulfilled.

In the third, select class is to be included, as we have observed, a part of the *Confessions*. The bulk, however, of that work is narrative and explanation, — setting for the gems of "impassioned prose", and must in the final analysis be put in the first class. It holds, we may say, a middle course; sometimes, indeed, rising toward a higher tone, but without attaining the deciding pitch of "passion";[1] sometimes stating mere matters external, — "ponderable facts . . . intelligible in almost any language".[2] Still, our author tells us that concerning this third order he lays greater emphasis upon the *Suspiria*,[3] and in a letter to a friend he says of them: "These... are the *ne plus ultra*, as regards the feeling and the power to express it, which I can ever hope to attain."[4] Originally these "Sighs from the Depths" consisted of an *Introductory Notice* (on dreaming), followed by

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[1] cf. XIII. 369.
[2] X. 229.
[3] cf. *D.* 8.
[4] *L.* 254. Letter to Prof. Lushington.

The Affliction of Childhood, The Palimpsest, Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow, The Apparition of the Brocken, Savannah La Mar, and several untitled paragraphs.[1] *The English Mail-Coach*, which was, in whole or in part,[2] at one time thought of in connection with this series,[3] never really appeared in it. But in fact the *Suspiria* suffered further diminution. In revising for the Edinburgh edition of his works, De Quincey cut much matter out of this production, and even removed two sections to an entirely different connection.[4] Yet in the *Suspiria* as we now possess them, printed according to the author's final intentions, there is still a large proportion of narrative and explanation, considering what his words might lead to expect regarding their "impassioned" quality.[5] Even in any one section, — in *Levana* itself, for example, which, De Quincey says, furnishes a clue to the whole course of his marvellous dreams or visions,[6] and which Masson calls "perhaps all in all the finest thing that De Quincey ever wrote,"[7] — there are introduced and mingled many explicit, "ponderable facts", — bathetic facts, one might say; such, for instance, as those appeals to etymology at the beginning of the section cited.[8] Gradually the explanatory matter gives place more and more, until the height of "impassioned prose" is reached.

Very similar is the case of *The English Mail-Coach*. The opening section of this was published by itself at first,[9] without notice that anything in connection was to follow. It purported to be a description of actual facts. The second and third sections appeared together two months later, accompanied by a note

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1 cf. Blackwood's Magazine, Mar., Apr., Jun., Jul., 1845; XIII. 332–3, *M.*

2 cf *D.* 36.

3 XIII. 328, *Postscript* of 1854.

4 cf. XIII. 333, *M.*

5 See *D.* 8.

6 XIII. 369, note.

7 XIII. 362, *M.*; cf. XIII. 2, *M.*

8 XIII. 362–3.

9 In Blackwood's Mag., Oct., 1849.

explaining their relation to the first and to each other, and from this note one learns that the second section is likewise a narrative of events "which really did occur".[1] It is true that this second section displays a general heightening of tone, a gathering of power toward a climax that is reached at its close; nevertheless, not until we leave the "dreadful scene circumstantially narrated", and enter the third section, the *Dream Fugue*, where that scene is "raised and idealised",[2] do we find what, after all restrictions, our author's included, may be put without hesitation in his third class.

Therefore, again, in the longest of the papers considered by De Quincey, at one time or another, as composing the *Suspiria*, scarcely a fifth is to be reckoned actually within the scope of his select order of production. However, if, as is true, not all the substance of the writings specifically mentioned by our author can really be ranged under this third head, so it is true as well that in writings about which he is silent in such connection, passages occur that may be termed "impassioned". These may have the length of a paragraph or two. At times they belong logically enough with their context; more frequently they fly out on a tangent, — on some incidental suggestion or associated idea, parenthetically. Often they are shorter. It is not impossible for a student of De Quincey to detect in a sentence, or a clause even, our author's tendency toward the "impassioned" state; although one would scarcely be prudent in insisting too forcibly on this or that instance.

But paragraphs or larger parts thereof, of the sort in question, are readily found, and regarding these we may speak of the tendency with reasonable assurance. The following very characteristic sentences, rich in style, were omitted by De Quincey in revision for the first collected edition of his works. They may be

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1 Blackwood, Dec. 1849, p. 741.
2 XIII. 329, *Author's Postscript* of 1854.

found in the first American edition, — that prepared independently by J. T. Fields. They are cited, partly because they can hardly be called essential to the article on *Wordsworth*, in which they stand, partly because images and expressions contained in them appear repeatedly in our author's "impassioned prose", and will be noticed elsewhere by us.[1] De Quincey is speaking of his wife: "When the golden gate was opened, when the gate moved upon its golden hinges, that opened to me the paradise of her society — when her young melodious laughter sounded in my too agitated ear — did I think of any claims that I might have? . . . . O heart! Why art thou disquieted? Tempestuous, rebellious heart! Oh, wherefore art thou still dreaming of things so long gone by . . . .? . . . . and then through blinding tears I see again that golden gate, again I stand waiting at the entrance; until dreams come that carry me to the paradise beyond".[2] It is unfortunate that compression requires us to curtail this beautiful passage. What concerns us at present is not its beauty, but the fact that, while it appears in a half critical paper, one that would, very likely, fall in De Quincey's second class,[3] it bears too striking a resemblance — even in so superficial a respect as diction,[4] — to portions of the *Dream Fugue*, to be considered as in a class apart from the latter production. Another characteristic passage containing an idea that plays a part in the *Dream Fugue* is this from a biographical notice entitled *Charles Lloyd*: "I . . . have staid for hours listening to . . . the sound of pealing anthems, as if streaming from the portals of some illimitable cathedral;" (a sound arising from the river Brathay) "and many times I have heard it, of a quiet night, when no stranger could have been persuaded to believe it other

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[1] cf. *D.* 18; 68, note 8, etc.
[2] Amer. Ed., Ticknor, Reed & Fields, Vol. 1. Chap. XIII.
[3] cf. *D.* 7, 8.
[4] e. g. XIII. 326, ll. 33–4.

than the sound of choral chanting — distant, solemn, saintly."[1] The passage is germane enough to its context. Lastly, of a sentence or clause, perhaps the following may serve well as an example, exhibiting as it does De Quincey's literary theory a little further. Speaking of style, he says: "And even for the subtlest of philosophers who keeps in mind the interpenetration of the style and the matter it would be as difficult to distribute the true proportions of their joint action as, with regard to the earliest rays of the dawn, it would be to say how much of the beauty lay in the heavenly light which chased away the darkness, how much in the rosy colour which that light entangled."[2] The latter half of the sentence belongs, rather than the former, in the third category.[3]

It is clear that for purposes of further discrimination among De Quincey's classes of his writings, and in order to determine better the nature of the third, we must have criteria more definite than those offered by the statements in his prefaces, or those gathered from the general principles of his theory of criticism. For the present let us notice two characteristics of the "impassioned prose", calling them respectively an *inner* and an *outer*; and for convenience' sake let us take for observation two selections of four lines each; one from the first section of *The English Mail-Coach*, the other from the third, — one from a part that cannot come under the head of "impassioned prose", the other from one which can and does.[4]

The first is: "Here, now, was the case of one who, having formerly suffered, might, erroneously perhaps, be distressing herself with anticipations of another similar suffering. That same night, and hardly three hours later, occurred the reverse case."[5] The second: "Lo, it is summer — almighty summer! The everlasting gates

[1] II. 401; cf. *D.* 66.
[2] X. 139.
[3] cf. *D.* 68, 73.
[4] cf. *D.* 12, 13, 36.
[5] XIII. 297–8.

of life and summer are thrown open wide; and on the ocean, tranquil and verdant as a savannah, the unknown lady from the dreadful vision and I myself are floating."[1]

As to the outer characteristic, in brief, let us take enough pains and interest to consider the number of times that the sounds represented by the letters *l*, *m*, *n*, *r*, and *ng* occur in these passages respectively, observing the ratio they bear in each case to the sum of all the consonants. In the first passage this dry ratio is found to be 37:99. In the second the semivowels are decidedly more abundant than in the first; the ratio is 47:92. In deciding what is to be included under "impassioned prose", the highly sonorous quality, indicated by this test, may well be noted.

The second criterion offered, the *inner*, consists in the fact that the "impassioned prose" is practically all subjective,[2] while the other classes of De Quincey's works vary more or less from the subjective point of view. The dreams were his own experiences, and he was conscious of his continual participation in them. "In dreams", says our author, ". . . of necessity, we make ourselves central to every movement."[3] "Ascend with me," he cries in *The Apparition of the Brocken*, — "Ascend with *me* on this dazzling Whitsunday the Brocken of North Germany."[4] *The Affliction of Childhood* is his own affliction; and the *Dream Echoes*, one of which the gesticulating *Apparition*, so to speak, acts, — note the transition from hearing to vision —,[5] are the more or less involuntary playings of his own memory. Similarly, *The Vision of Life* is his own vision; *The Vision of Sudden Death* he saw with his own eyes. It is he that beholds *Savannah La Mar* through the waters; and *Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow* he consciously hears talking concerning him. In one of the

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[1] XIII. 319.
[2] e. g. III. 442—6.
[3] III. 446.
[4] I. 51. (Italics not De Q's.)
[5] cf. *D.* 42, 71.

most remarkable passages of the *Confessions*, where De Quincey is describing the oriental imagery of one circle of his dreams, the first personal pronoun occurs, in a very short space, no less than thirteen times.[1]

Together, these two criteria afford sufficient certainty for our purposes; we may readily affirm of any passage of appreciable length in our author's writings that it is "impassioned prose", if it is intensely subjective, and at the same time displays such sonorous outer form as is produced, in part at least, by the elements above noted and exemplified. The characteristics in question are, so to speak, strongly bound up together; as indeed De Quincey himself would have been willing to assert. "Ponderable facts," he says, "and external realities are intelligible in almost any language: . . . But, the more closely any exercise of mind is connected with what is internal and individual in the sensibilities, — that is, with what is philosophically termed *subjective*, — precisely in that degree, and the more subtly, does the style or the embodying of the thoughts cease to be a mere separable ornament, and in fact the more does the manner . . . become confluent with the matter".[2] The outer feature which we have indicated is one of the most evident modes in which the inner character of our author works; as soon as he begins to think intensely about himself, or to express shades of feeling strongly and habitually his, his language commences modulating in harmonious cadences.

On closer examination one discovers in the third class of De Quincey's writings a vocabulary which is in the main peculiar to it, and which corresponds to a number of recurring ideas that compose the basis of our author's mental and imaginative structure. These distinctive words, and characteristic phrases formed of them, are, it is true, scattered throughout the papers of the first two classes, but they increase in frequency whenever "the narrative rises to a . . . higher key",[3]

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[1] III. 442—3.
[2] X. 229.
[3] *D.* 7.

and finally make the web and woof of the prose poems. The list of such words need not here be too widely extended; it includes the following, with such cognates as, for example, participles and adjectives in *ing*: —

abysmal, agitation, altitude, angel, brooding, children, crimson, darkness, dawn, deliverance, demoniac, dreadful, dream, early, emblazon, fainting, farewell, fawn, female, final, fret, frozen, funeral, glory, impassioned, infant, lawn, light, lurking, machinery, malice, mockery, morning, mysterious, organ, panic, pariah, peace, peril, racing, rapture, reconciliation, relenting, secrecy, serenity, slender, sleeping, silence, suddenly, sunny, treachery, trembling, victorious, vision, wheeling.

Concerning these words, here given in mere alphabetical sequence, and without logical connection, we need only again remark that they stand for characteristic conceptions in our author, and we may then proceed to observe in these too that remarkably sonorous quality readily noticed through the large presence of semivowels. Other matters connected with this quality, or relating to the significance of the words themselves, will be referred to elsewhere.[1] The semivowels, representing roughly only five different sounds in all, — *ng* is included — are in this word-list as 119 to 93, where the latter figure stands for all the other consonants, — of which, roughly, at least eighteen can be noted. If we put the statement in the same form as that made for the passages compared above,[2] the ratio of these five sounds to the whole number of consonants is as 114 to 212, or more than one half. However, as the semivowels are heard in ordinary unimaginative English prose more frequently than the remaining consonants, it may be well to test the value of this comparison by another. Accordingly, taking for convenience' sake the opening paragraph of one of Masson's prefaces,[3] we notice that the ratio is only 72: 197. The passage

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[1] cf. *D.* Chapters IV, V.
[2] *D.* 16.
[3] X. 1, *M.*

was chosen at random, but the figures are easy to compare with the previous ones. Let us select a passage from another preface, — a passage written perhaps not without some glow on the part of Masson: "Despite the prevalence still of the vulgar and disastrous misconception which has made Poetry a mere synonym for Verse-Literature of any sort, all sound theorists are agreed in some variety or other of that definition of Poetry which makes it to consist essentially in a particular kind of matter or mental product, — viz. the matter or product of the faculty or mood of mind called Imagination or Phantasy."[1] Here, where the writer seems to be rising a little from the world of "ponderable facts", the ratio in question is about 70:153; to make it equivalent to that of the De Quincey word-list, the first figure should be 80.

Let so much, then, suffice for an inner and an outer criterion of De Quincey's "impassioned prose". Other characteristics, bound up with these, contributed indeed their weight in the choice as to what part of the prose poetry it were best to treat in particular; but it seemed wise to develop no more than two at this point. Nevertheless, as our author has given us what he considered a prominent trait of the dreams or visions that constitute the bulk of his lyric, namely, "*the general idea of a search and a chase*", which "*reproduced itself in many shapes*",[2] we may accept this on his authority, and pass on.

That section of the writings of the third class which we have selected as a center for the investigation already begun, is taken first of all from those papers which our author designated as the *ne plus ultra* of his creative power. Some of these are, however, to a certain extent devoid of unity. *Savannah La Mar,* which has indeed sufficient continuity, is very short. *Levana* is interspersed with passages not notably sonorous or with any straining to be called "impassioned".[3] The *Dream*

[1] XIII. 6, *M.*
[2] III. 222.
[3] e. g., Paragraph beginning on XIII. 263.

Fugue, on the other hand, is unbroken by any of the digressions which injure the flow of so many of De Quincey's writings. It is long enough and continuous enough in its characteristics to allow the author's subjective nature to mirror itself completely therein. It is throughout sonorous; and, finally, the "idea of a search and a chase" recurs prominently in it. The excellence of this paper as an exemplar of De Quincey's peculiar order of composition appears more and more as we proceed in the examination of the third class.

II.

The Opium Habit and De Quincey's Imaginative Prose.

The portions of De Quincey's writings which we have termed prose poetry or, after his coinage, "impassioned prose," are commonly supposed to have come into being under the influence of the baleful drug which so long had the unfortunate man in thrall. One of the first questions arising about his literary activity is the real effect, if this can be learned, which opium worked upon De Quincey's style and matter. But in spite of the sway over his imagination that he sometimes ascribed to this agent, and notwithstanding the fact that in his autobiographical writings and there alone, practically, lie all the means that exist for the solution of this problem,[1] no one, it seems, has as yet had the patience to gather and to compare judicially our author's various statements in this connection, so as to draw results approximately well-based and useful. Masson, it is true, at least in one place,[2] seems to assume the position advanced in the present chapter, but does not adhere to it throughout.[3] Another editor, without furnishing reasons drawn from our author's life and works, affirms that opium was not the cause of De Quincey's imaginative productions, and then treads on dangerous ground in offering an opinion as to what would have happened, had the Opium-Eater never been addicted to the drug. — He would not, we learn, have written

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[1] cf. Martineau, *Biographical Sketches*, 409 (bibl. 45).
[2] I. xxiv, *M.*
[3] XIII 7. *M.*

poetically, but only on philosophical lines: "Opium, incapacitating him for continuous mental toil, left his imagination and power of language unaffected";[1] — an impossible separation of faculties, according to De Quincey's way of thinking.[2] On the other hand, there has been a general popular tendency to marvel at the effects which laudanum etc. wrought in our author's style,[3] — a disposition which he does not appear to discourage.[4]

As to the relation of opium to the prose poems, we may follow a division of the question indicated by De Quincey himself,[5] and ask, first, in how far their *conception*, second, to what extent their *execution*, was modified by the abuse of the drug.

Now as regards the first aspect of the problem: in the notes explanatory to part third of the *Confessions* our author says flatly, "Here is the briefest possible abstract of the total case: — The final object of the whole record lay in the dreams. For the sake of those the entire narrative arose. But what caused the dreams? Opium used in unexampled excess. But what caused this excess in the use of opium? Simply the early sufferings,"[6] — that is, sufferings from hunger and exposure during youth.[7] In this, then, De Quincey attributes to opium alone the origin of those frequently mentioned visions, for which we must — with little success — search the *Confessions*. The words above are substantially a repetition of a passage written in 1845 in the first section of the *Suspiria*.[8] Again, elsewhere in the *Confessions* as revised in 1856, we read: "I beg to say here, in closing my Original Preface, a

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[1] *Confessions*, Ed. R. Garnett, XVI. (bibl. 5).

[2] cf. *D.* 10.

[3] cf. Quarterly Rev. 110:21 (bibl. 70); Canadian Monthly 13:360 (bibl. 71).

[4] cf. Atlantic Monthly 40:570 (bibl. 67); N. Amer. Rev. 88:125 (bibl. 93).

[5] cf. *D.* 8.

[6] III. 413 (written in 1856).

[7] cf. *D.* 38, note 1.

[8] XIII. 336.

little remodelled, that what I contemplated in these Confessions was to emblazon the power of opium . . . over the grander and more shadowy world of dreams."[1] And let us not forget the loss of those "twenty or twenty-five dreams and noon-day visions, which had arisen under the latter stages of opium influence."[2] In another place our author records that 'Opium (if taken in a proper manner) produces amongst the mental faculties the most exquisite order, legislation, and harmony', and that it gives "cloudless serenity" to the moral affections and the intellect.[3] He says further: "He", the opium-eater, "naturally seeks solitude and silence, as indispensable conditions of those trances, or profoundest reveries, which are the crown and consummation of what opium can do for human nature . . . I often fell into such reveries after taking opium . . ."[4]

Such may be considered among the most striking of the passages in which De Quincey chronicles his debt to opium alone for his faculty of vision. After a perusal of words like these, it is a matter of surprise to find, as we pass through his works, other influences noted by our author, sometimes more or less in connection with the drug, — influences which operated on his dreams. In one place we are told that, while opium seems to have a specific power in assisting the faculty of vision, different things, among them, exercise, may give aid, — "to some extent at least, for some persons."[5] One recalls De Quincey's own prowess in walking and his surprising endurance,[6] which was, however, according to his account, at times sustained by the juice of the poppy.[7] In another passage we read of a remarkable stomach-trouble, something mentioned often in his writings,

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[1] III. 215.
[2] III. 221.
[3] III. 383—4.
[4] III. 394—5.
[5] XIII. 335.
[6] *L.* 334.
[7] III. 420.

accompanied by dreams; an affliction that he had, in this instance, in 1813, nine years after his first dallyings with laudanum. It was in his efforts to palliate this irritation of the stomach, so we learn, that De Quincey became a "confirmed opium-eater".[1] One hears many times, too, of anomalous ailments, nervous symptoms and the like, and finds the author referring to derangement of the nerves as a cause of mental vision;[2] while opium seems in this relation to be working, not for, but against his dreaming, since he calls it the "tranquilliser of nervous sensations" which are the "secret desolator of life".[3] In *The Palimpsest*, one of the *Suspiria* papers, the "tumult of images" is described as "the coruscation of a restless understanding, often made ten times more so by irritation of the nerves."[4] As above, silence and solitude are added to the number of assistant causes: "No man ever will unfold the capacities of his own intellect who does not at least checker his life with solitude", is the burden of a sentence relating to the power of dreaming.[5] — Here it is desirable merely to observe that, in recognising several minor causes of his states of vision, De Quincey really retreats from those bold and unqualified assertions cited at the beginning of this chapter.[6]

Our author tends, however, to modify still further our opinion as to the exclusive influence of the drug on his dreams, when he introduces to us a cause or causes of those dreams, not contemporaneous with the unlucky habit; namely, his experiences during childhood and youth. In sentences that are among the additions of his later years to the *Confessions*, he tells us that in the incidents of his early life is to be found "the entire substratum, together with the secret and underlying

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[1] III. 398; cf. Knight, Passages of a Working life, I. 327 (bibl. 41).

[2] XIII. 291; cf. III. 220 etc.

[3] III. 420—1.

[4] XIII. 346.

[5] XIII. 335; cf. III. 270.

[6] *D.* 22, 23.

motive, of those pompous dreams and dream-sceneries."[1] Likewise, in the *Suspiria*, we are informed that reflection led him to believe "that not one agency, but two agencies had co-operated to the tremendous result. The nursery experience", — a vague term for several experiences[2] — "had been the ally and the natural coefficient of the opium".[3] Our purpose continually is not to discuss any difficulty of harmonising De Quincey's various suggestions and statements, and we desire here only to indicate that in this is offered us, not some mere minor cause aiding the opium — a cause perhaps itself owing to irregularities with the drug, — and not simply a *substratum* of material upon which the aroused dreaming faculty might work, but a *motive*, a word, as a note explains,[4] borrowed from music, — something pertaining to the *conception* of the dreams, yet existing prior to the opium habit. Again he says even: "The idealising tendency existed in the dream-theatre of my childhood."[5] We are given to understand, in the notes explaining the *Dream Echoes*, that this tendency was quiescent for an interval of twelve years, and was awakened once more during De Quincey's Oxford career, at the time when he began his unfortunate habit.[6]

Thus, then, we have here, quite outside the sphere of opium, a main cause, freely admitted, even emphasised, for such portions of the *Confessions* as belong in the third class of our author's writings, and also for the *Suspiria*. With reference to *The English Mail-Coach*, he details at some length a number of objective elements that contributed to influence his *conception*. Let us quote: "These mail-coaches", says he, ". . . are entitled to a circumstantial notice from myself, having had so large a share in developing the anarchies of my sub-

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[1] III. 233.
[2] cf. I. 28—49.
[3] XIII. 340.
[4] III. 233, note.
[5] XIII. 340.
[6] I. 49; cf. XIII. 340.

sequent dreams: an agency which they accomplished, 1st, through velocity . . .; 2dly, through grand effects for the eye between lamp-light and the darkness upon solitary roads; 3dly, through animal beauty and power so often displayed in the class of horses selected for this mail service; 4thly, through the conscious presence of a central intellect, that, in the midst of vast distances . . . overruled all obstacles into one steady cooperation . . . But, finally, that particular element . . . through which it is that to this hour [1] Mr. Palmer's mail-coach system tyrannises over my dreams . . . lay in the awful *political* mission which at that time it fulfilled. The mail-coach it was that distributed over the face of the land . . . the heart-shaking news of Trafalgar, of Salamanca, of Vittoria, of Waterloo".[2] He adds: "The mail-coach, as the national organ for publishing these mighty events . . ., became itself a spiritualised and glorified object to an impassioned heart . . . in early manhood."[3] One observes that our author lays some emphasis upon the connection of his experiences — dreams, or whatever they were — with an "impassioned" heart or sensibility. It is true, he mentions taking a small quantity of opium as he ascended the coach on the night when the basal facts of a subsequent dream are said to have met his eye;[4] but it will be recalled that in his words above he speaks as if not one, but numerous rides, had been responsible for the impression made upon his dreaming faculty. He states his belief, too, that the present modes of travel by steam could not produce the same effects on the imagination as did the mail-coach system. "Nile nor Trafalgar has power to raise an extra bubble in a steam-kettle," [5] says he, and he compares the mob at a railway-station unfavorably with the throng that used to weave around a starting mail-coach.

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[1] Written apparently after 1844; cf. *D.* 36.
[2] XIII. 271—2.
[3] XIII. 272—3.
[4] XIII. 306.
[5] XIII. 284.

Incidents also are now wanting on the journey, so he thinks, to stir the 'impassioned heart': "How else, for example, than as a constant watcher for the dawn, and for the London mail that in summer months entered about daybreak amongst the lawny thickets of Marlborough forest, couldst thou, sweet Fanny of the Bath road, have become the glorified inmate of my dreams?"[1] Such was the striking beauty of this wayside girl that De Quincey could recall her vividly after many years, with a thousand associations aroused by the restoration of her and the Bath road in vision. He uses the words *vision* and *dream* in connectious like this, it seems, indifferently. One discovers more and more a somewhat voluntary power of representaton on our author's part. "Out of the darkness," writes he, "if I happen to call back the image of Fanny, up rises suddenly from a gulf of forty years a rose in June."[2] There follows a flood of suggested ideas, beautiful and grotesque together; but it appears to indicate a fairly conscious and intentional sort of vision, rather than a picturing faculty animated by a drug, that our author was so careful, in the revison of his works, to change the number of years as they elapsed. In the earlier form of this production, the rose came up suddenly from a gulf of only thirty-five years.[3]

De Quincey has spoken, in a passage already quoted,[4] of the "anarchies" of his dreams, and he tells his critics that for any want of congruity in the *Dream Fugue* the dream, not he, must be held responsible.[5] None the less, he is at great pains to uphold the logic of events therein. In answering strictures put upon this production, he says: "I will sketch . . . a brief abstract of the little paper according to my *original design*[6] . . . Thirty-seven years ago . . . accident made me, in the

[1] XIII. 285.
[2] XIII. 289.
[3] cf. Blackwood's Mag. Oct. 1849, p. 494.
[4] *D.* 25.
[5] XIII. 330.
[6] Italics not De Quincey's.

dead of night, . . . the solitary witness of an appalling scene, which threatened instant death . . . to two young people whom I had no means of assisting, except in so far as I was able to give them a most hurried warning of their danger; but even *that* not until they stood within the very shadow of the catastrophe, being divided from the most frightful of deaths by scarcely more . . . than seventy seconds. . . . But a movement of horror, and of spontaneous recoil from this dreadful scene, naturally carried the whole of that scene, raised and idealised, into my dreams." He then repeats practically the same points noted above,[1] which appealed to his waking imagination, and arranged themselves according to his conscious reason.[2] In all this our author, be it noticed, has nothing to say of his drug.

We turn to the paper on *Dreaming*, expecting naturally to receive, in this introduction to the *Suspiria*, illumination on the subject of De Quincey's faculty of vision. Here we learn that the object of the *Confessions* was "to reveal something of the grandeur which belongs *potentially* to human dreams". The author observes: "Whatever may be the number of those in whom this faculty of dreaming splendidly can be supposed to lurk, there are not, perhaps, very many in whom it is developed. He whose talk is of oxen will probably dream of oxen; and the condition of human life which yokes so vast a majority to a daily experience incompatible with much elevation of thought oftentimes neutralises the tone of grandeur in the reproductive faculty of dreaming, even for those whose minds are populous with solemn imagery. Habitually to dream magnificently, a man must have a constitutional determination to reverie."[3] Is there anything of opium in this? No. Our author affirms nothing more mysterious than that a natural mental elevation is the first requisite for splendid vision, and that daily life may

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[1] *D.* 25, 26; cf. Blackwood, Dec. 1849, p. 741.
[2] XIII. 328—9.
[3] XIII. 334.

aid or baffle this latter according to circumstances. When we hear of constitutional determination to reverie as a necessary condition, do we not recall such passages as that where De Quincey says of himself: "My constitutional infirmity of mind ran but too determinately towards the sleep of endless reverie, and of dreamy abstraction from life and its realities,"[1] — words referring to his character at a time far previous to 1804, the year in which he first took opium? When, too, solitude is mentioned as an important accessory, and when, reading further, we learn that the hurry of modern life is unfavorable to the dreaming power, it is not easy to forget that De Quincey was himself his whole career almost a recluse. We then remember that sentence, "No man ever will unfold the capacities of his own intellect who does not at least checker his life with solitude",[2] well aware that a direct application may be made to our author's own development; he undoubtedly believed that he had unfolded *his* capacities in the way here intimated.

We may at this point appositely quote De Quincey's statement: "The *Opium Confessions* were written with some slight secondary purpose of exposing this specific power of opium upon the faculty of dreaming, but much more with the purpose of displaying the faculty itself;"[3] and having withdrawn with him thus far from the plain statement that the drug was the only or all-important element to be considered in connection with his dreaming ability and the *conception* of his dreams, let us turn for a time to the other side of the question. To what extent did the habit influence the composition or *execution*, of those writings of the third and highest order?

It is generally known that De Quincey did not ultimately give up the use of opium altogether, although he flattered himself more than once that he had over-

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[1] III. 242—3.
[2] XIII. 335.
[3] ibid.

come the habit, and at the end of the *Confessions* left his reader so to believe.[1] We are aware, however, that, on his last attempt, the effects of totally abjuring the drug even for a short period were so threatening, that he purposely recommenced, and continued taking it, in reduced quantities, to the end of his life.[2] "I . . . did", says he, four several times contend successfully against the dominion of this drug; did four several times renounce it; renounced it for long intervals; and finally resumed it upon the warrant of my enlightened and deliberate judgment, as being of two evils by very much the least."[3] (*sic.*) Our author marked out four distinct periods of unresisting submission to his thrall, namely, 1813—14, 1817—18, 1823—24, and 1841—44.[4] After 1844 his daily quantum was relatively, and even absolutely, small.

In point of time, accordingly, the prose poetry may be divided into two parts: that which appeared *before*, and that *after* 1844.

By 1819 De Quincey's competent patrimony had become utterly involved through inattention and mismanagement, and the unpractical, unworldly man was forced to earning money with his pen. Money, he says, was his sole object in the cultivation of literature, when he wrote his "earliest paper", the *Confessions*.[5] He was then decreasing the amounts of the daily doses, a process that occasioned him great suffering. But, "at times", he says, "when I had slept at more regular hours for several nights consecutively, and had armed myself by a sudden increase of the opium for a few days running, I recovered, at times," *(sic)* "a remarkable glow of jovial spirits. In some such artificial respites it was . . . that I wrote the greater part of the Opium Confessions in the autumn of 1821"[6] — i. e., in August

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[1] III. 447; cf. III. 467.
[2] L. 245; cf. Garnett, Ed. Op. Eat. 267 (bibl. 5).
[3] III. 232.
[4] Garnett, Ed. Op. Eat. 266 (bibl. 5).
[5] III. 128; cf. III. 77.
[6] III. 75; cf. *L.* 170.

and September. By "earliest paper", mentioned above, we must understand *earliest of importance:* two years already De Quincey had been doing work for periodicals;[1] and R. P. Gillies informs us that still earlier, in 1815—16, our author "had literary compositions written on little scraps of paper, but in his own estimation they were by no means 'ready for the press'."[2] So far as the present writer can discover, there is no way of learning the time when De Quincey wrote any such early series of dreams as he gives intimations about in connection with the *Confessions.* And in looking through the original form of this work one finds but an extremely small part of it to consist of dreams, or "impassioned prose", — so small a portion, that it seems a little ridiculous in our author to have raised the expectations of his reader to such a pitch concerning it. About two thirds the way through there is an apostrophe to opium, of a page in length; not itself a vision, but a description of sensations in opium dreams.[3] After that, no more of the strictly "impassioned" prose occurs until towards the end, when, after detailing some characteristic features of his visons, our author, by way of illustration, adds, at the most, only three actual dreams, a very small bulk in all, of which the latter two are more distinct and individual.[4] Of these two, one is dated *June 1819;* whether it was experienced, or merely written, then, cannot be determined: the other is from 1820, and was experienced then, but just when written, it is impossible to say. In any case both must have been composed between 1819 and 1821, not a period of deepest submission to opium.[5] And clearly they were not put together under the particular stimulus that supported the labor of the mass of the *Confessions.*

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[1] L. 152—4; cf. Pollitt. De Q's Editorship of the Westmoreland Gaz. (bibl. 52).

[2] Memoirs of a Literary Veteran, III. 218 (bibl. 30).

[3] Garnett, Ed. Op. Eat. 93—4 (bibl. 5).

[4] Ibid. 139—140, 145, 146.

[5] cf. *D.* 30.

What may certainly be said of these or of any dreams or series of dreams which De Quincey ever had ready to enter in the *Confessions,* is that, on his own word, they were not written in a mere glow of spirits. He reminds the reader "of the perilous difficulty besieging all attempts to clothe in words the visionary scenes derived from the world of dreams, where a single false note, a single word in a wrong key, ruins the whole music."[1] We have already referred to the passages in which he implies, or directly affirms, that some smaller part of the *Confessions* had not been written hastily, — had received at least "an ordinary verbal correction".[2] De Quincey sympathises with the toils of others in composition, — with the "excessive labour" of Junius, for example;[3] and we know by all accounts how careful a workman he himself was, how rarely content with his creations.[4] The great part of the *Confessions,* because of financial pressure, was put together hastily. Later in life when the author came to revise, he bestowed measureless pains on this work, toiling on in spite of "a nervous malady of very peculiar character". "Although pretty nearly dedicating myself to this one solitary labour, and not intermitting or relaxing it for a single day, I have yet spent," he says in 1856, "within a very few days, six calendar months upon the re-cast of this one small volume".[5] In this revision he changed the general narrative to a large extent, he added lyrical matter as well, and he modified slightly the lyrical matter already existing. For example, he lengthens a little the apostrophe to opium already mentioned.[6] That he did not find much to alter in these "impassioned" passages may argue partly for

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[1] I. 14.
[2] cf. III. 76, 219.
[3] III. 139.
[4] cf. Garnett, Ed. Op. Eat. Introd. XII (bibl. 5); Eclectic Rev. 100:398 (bibl. 80).
[5] III. 220.
[6] *D.* 31; cf. Garnett, Ed. Op. Eat. 93—4 (bibl. 5); III. 395, 6.

their supposed original superiority of conception, but also partly for greater care and less hurry in their composition at first. The question is entirely aside from the benefit or injury done the work as a whole by the changes which it underwent.[1] If, as we are led to believe, there were at least some small portions of the "impassioned prose" put together prior to the main part of the *Confessions*, and done not under stress for money, we may suppose that the author took his time and perfected these to the utmost.

Between 1821, when the *Confessions* appeared, and 1844, lay a period during which De Quincey was very active in literary pursuits, without, however, publishing any "impassioned prose" of significance. Subjective passages in his rich manner are, of course, scattered throughout the writings of this portion of his life. But one trace only of any production related to his own third class is discoverable: Tait's Magazine for 1834 contains a rough draught of *The Affliction of Childhood,* a paper later included for a time with the *Suspiria.*[2]

In 1844 our author made a determined effort to shake off the miserable yoke which he had again allowed to settle heavily on his shoulders. He strove manfully with the opium, and he gained at length that practical freedom from it which he maintained for the rest of his life. From this time on, according to his own account[3] and his daughter's,[4] he rarely exceeded six grains daily; one must compare this amount with previous excesses of three hundred and twenty, even as high as four hundred grains within the twenty-four hours.[5] From opium in the later period he mentions no effect other than that of lulling his nerves and enabling him to support protracted exertion.[6] We hear of no

[1] cf. Garnett, Ed. Op. Eat., Introduction, VII, VIII; III. 9. *M.*
[2] cf. XIV. 378, *M.*
[3] III. 420.
[4] *L.* 245.
[5] III. 420.
[6] ibid.

artificial glow aiding the imagination or concerned in the production of any work. As De Quincey was approaching a state of entire liberty, he wrote: "On Friday, the 23rd of February, I might say for the first time, in scriptural words, 'And the man was sitting clothed and in his right mind'."[1] He thought of himself as one who had escaped impending lunacy, so injuriously had his abuses affected his intellect. In June of this year, 1844, he had reduced his doses to the six grains *per diem*. It was after this that he began to write the *Suspiria de Profundis*.

These papers appeared in Blackwood's Magazine, beginning March, 1845. They cost him seven months of severe application, he says. They were finished shortly before the whole work was sent to print.[2]

As to *The Daughter of Lebanon*, with its nineteen or twenty-four lost companions, we do not know the time of writing. The first certain mention of these papers is in 1856, when the sole survivor was published.[3] De Quincey says that the "twenty or twenty-five" dreams arose "under the latter stages of opium influence".[4] What does he mean? He is now, in 1856, offering something in place of that third part of the Confessions, promised in 1821.[5] Can "latter stages" refer to so early a date as the second? Hardly. Our author seems to have left unfulfilled in those days his purpose to add an appreciable amount of dream-literature to the narrative of the *Confessions*, simply because he could not produce it. The pressure for money should have brought to light all his available material.[6] Further, the *Suspiria* counted as a *Sequel* to the *Confessions*. We know when the *Suspiria* were written, namely, in a period of seven months somewhat prior to March, 1845. And in connection with these papers,

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[1] *L.* 243.
[2] *L.* 253. Letter to Prof. Lushington.
[3] See *D.* 9.
[4] III. 221.
[5] III. 6. *M.*
[6] cf. *D.* 30.

a note by the author vaguely foreshadows their future expansion[1]; traces of his purpose are to be found in suggestive titles and half-wrought paragraphs of an "impassioned" nature, contained in his posthumous works.[2] Elsewhere he remarks, in 1853: "... of the *Suspiria* not more than perhaps one-third has yet been printed,"[3] — referring, it may be, to the contents of his mind, rather than to manuscript; although the present writer admits the possibility of discovering, in or about De Quincey's various lodgings, hitherto unprinted writings of some value. But there is no clear evidence that the lost "dreams and noon-day visions" were thought of more than four years previous to the appearance of *The Daughter of Lebanon.* It was about that time, too, that is, in 1852, that De Quincey began to plan a revision, with amplification, of his writings. Certainly, everything points to the belief that the missing papers were not written before the year 1844.

Perhaps it needs scarcely be observed that thus far only a trifling part of the "impassioned prose" can be put prior to 1844, or, therefore, in the general period of subjection to opium, and that even this small portion cannot be proved to have been written under the influence of the drug.

Let us, however, look at *The Mail-Coach* and the *Dream Fugue.* If the three parts of this production were not written together, but with appreciable intervals, anyone might suppose, naturally, that the part printed first had been composed first: it appeared without intimation of more to follow, whereas De Quincey made every effort to show the connection between this and the remaining two parts when they came out.[4] But a singular fidelity to dates, or at least a proneness to observe them on small occasion,[5] even in our author's 'impassioned' moments, enables us in a curious way to

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[1] XIII. 369. note.
[2] cf. *The Uncoll. writings,* (bibl. 6.)
[3] I. 14.
[4] See Blackwood's Mag. Dec. 1849, p. 741.
[5] cf. *D.* 65.

assign separate years to two parts of the paper, and the result is not what one would have supposed. We recall that in the first part, *The Glory of Motion,* De Quincey describes a rose as coming up to his vision *after thirty-five years,* — that is, in the Blackwood form — but in the revised edition, namely, in 1854, *after forty years.*[1] According to this, five years had elapsed between the revision and the previous date of writing, and the first section was composed in 1849. But in the 'impassioned' introductory paragraph of the *Dream Fugue,* the *Blackwood* of 1849 inquires of the "Fragment of music . . . heard once and heard no more, what aileth thee that thy deep rolling chords ... *after thirty years* have lost no element of horror?"[2] — while this rather incomprehensible sentence has in the 1854 edition '*after forty years* lost no element of horror'.[3] We shall see, later on, evidences of borrowing between the *Dream Fugue* and a paper entitled *Sortilege and Astrology,* — which was written and printed in 1848 — and of borrowing apparently by the latter from the former.[4] This gives ground for believing that the *Dream Fugue* was in existence prior to 1849; but on the basis of the dates examined above, it seems to have been written some ten years before 1854, that is, in 1844, the year in which De Quincey began the *Suspiria*; and that agrees, definitely enough for our author, with his saying that the *Mail-Coach* paper according to his original intention formed a part of the *Suspiria.* The present writer credits De Quincey with the desire of accuracy. But to make our author perfectly consistent, we must suppose either that he carried the scheme of *The Glory of Motion* and *The Vision of Sudden Death* for five years in his head, or else that, having had all three parts complete for five years in 1849, he changed the date in the first instance and not in the second; as, in 1854, he altered in both cases. In any event

[1] cf. *D.* 27.
[2] Blackwood Dec. 1849, p. 751. (Italics not De Q's.)
[3] XIII. 319.
[4] cf. *D.* 64, 65.

we seem justified in holding that the *Dream Fugue*, his longest piece of "impassioned prose", was written after our author's practical release from opium, and that at least this one paper lay by his side for five years before he published it, — a sufficient time for much verbal pruning, such as he thought necessary for this kind of word-music.

For the execution of the "impassioned" passages outside of the *Confessions* and the *Suspiria*, one can scarcely argue opium excitation as a cause. Scattered as such passages are for the most part, they break in at any moment; the higher key is sustained for a very little while; and then the author subsides into a more subdued tone, in a way that hardly points to a continued, equable artificial stimulus of hours. The most important portions of lyric not hitherto mentioned occur in a quasi-historical paper, *Joan of Arc*,[1] of which De Quincey thought highly, mentioning it once, in terms of praise, with the *Suspiria*.[2] This too was written after 1844, — actually, in the spring of 1847.[3]

It seems as though one should be very cautious about attributing excellences in the *execution* of De Quincey's prose poems to any mysterious influence of drugging. But it may be well to turn again to the question of *conception*.

We have seen how our author, in addition to opium, catalogues exercise, nervous disturbance, "constitutional determination", solitude, silence, and elevated daily surroundings, as causes of dreaming or vision. Another cause or concomitant of his dreams was that stomach-trouble, brought on, it seems, by the hardships of runaway life as a boy.[4] "I was attacked," he says, referring to the year 1813, "by a most appalling irritation of the stomach, in all respects the same as that which had caused me so much suffering in youth", —

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[1] e. g., V. 384—6.
[2] *L.* 266.
[3] cf. V. 386.
[4] cf. *D.* 24.

that is, before 1804, — "and accompanied by a revival of all the old dreams. Now, then, it was . . . that I became a regular and confirmed (no longer an intermitting) opium-eater."[1] Whether De Quincey chose proper means for contending against his malady, is a question for medical men;[2] as regards our problem, we are at one stroke driven from the period of his opium-eating, to look for a history of his dreams, prior to 1804. A homeless and wandering waif, some seventeen years of age, he had in London, as we learn, dreams "which were only not so awful as those . . . produced by opium".[3] And yet we are told by him that after commencing with the drug in 1804, immediately the "agitations" of his *childhood* "reopened in strength".[4] Seemingly there had been a long quiescence in the faculty of dreaming.[5] His visions began early. He had a remarkable one about a favorite nurse 'before he could have completed his second year', so he says, and he adds: ". . . it demonstrates my dreaming tendencies to have been constitutional and not dependent upon laudanum."[6] Again, when he was seven years old,[7] standing by the bier of his little sister, a trance fell upon him, and he had a vision. "At this time," he relates, "and under this impulse of rapacious grief . . . the faculty of shaping images in the distance out of slight elements . . . grew upon me". . .[8] He then describes visions, and beautiful ones they were, that he saw as a child in church.[9] All this about his childhood days De Quincey wrote in 1844 or 1845, at the same time that he mentions the interval of twelve years, and speaks of the recurrence of his dreams when he was eighteen years old, and had begun to take opium.

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[1] III. 398; cf. III. 355.
[2] cf. *L.* 505. Appendix of W. C. B. Eatwell, M. D.
[3] III. 355.
[4] I. 49.
[5] I. 32; cf. *D.* 25.
[6] I. 32.
[7] I. 37. *M.*
[8] I. 46.
[9] I. 47.

But about 1855 our author made, among other insertions in the *Confessions*, some statements, incidental to the narrative, yet interesting enough in their bearing here. Speaking of his guardian, he observes, "It gave him pleasure that he could reach me in the very recesses of my dreams, where even a Pariah might look for rest." These words refer to the author at the age of twelve, and it is in this connection that he expresses his opinion that his constitutional infirmity had been a proneness to reverie.[1] When not quite fifteen years old, he was, on one occasion, in St. Paul's in London, and beneath the dome, — "a spot", he says, "from which we saw, pompously floating to and fro in the upper spaces of a great aisle running westwards from ourselves, many flags captured from France, Spain, and Holland." There, with his "previous impressions of awe deepened by these solemn trophies of chance and change amongst mighty nations", he "had suddenly been surprised by a dream ..."[2] In the same connection he speaks of a vision that he had when he was not quite seventeen: "... with my eyes open I dreamed. Suddenly a sort of trance, a frost as of some death-like revelation, wrapped round me."[3] On the next page the incident is retold: "I dreamed ominously with open eyes in my Manchester study."[4] These sentences were written at a time when De Quincey was practically free from opium, concerning a time when he had not as yet taken the drug. Putting together incidental and fugitive references, we find that our author had, or speaks of having, noteworthy dreams or visions at intervals from his second to his eighteenth year. He was in his nineteenth when he began the use of laudanum.

It is the opinion of the present writer that opium acted, and could have acted, in no positive and helpful way upon De Quincey's imagination; and it seems

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[1] III. 242—3.
[2] III. 296; cf. *D.* 66.
[3] III. 295.
[4] III. 296; cf. III. 347.

unnecessary to add much to an argument whose trend and basis are already clearly enough to be seen.

We may, however, without being able here to penetrate it deeply, indicate a side-problem bearing on our question. At an early age De Quincey became acquainted with J. P. Richter's works. Our author's first published translation from the German was a selection from Jean Paul; a part of it was done in 1811.[1] In October, 1821, a month after finishing the *Confessions*, De Quincey names Richter specifically as his favorite in German literature.[2] Somewhat later he published still other *Analects* from this writer — for example, the *Dream upon the Universe.*[3] De Quincey never lost his admiration for Jean Paul.

One recalls our author's words: "The machinery for dreaming planted in the human brain was not planted for nothing."[4] With good examples of poetical prose and dream-literature before him, he may be interpreted: a man should make the most of his gifts in this direction. As for opium, our author's judgment regarding a great contemporary may well be applied to himself. "We are of the opinion," says he, "that it," — the drug, "killed Coleridge as a poet".[5] During an attempt in earlier years to shake off his habit, De Quincey writes to a friend: "I protest to you that I have a greater influx of thoughts in one hour at present than in a whole year under the reign of opium. It seems as though all the thoughts which had been frozen up for a decade of years by opium had now, according to the old fable, been thawed all at once."[6] One can readily see a personal application, when our author says: "Either the human being must suffer and struggle, as the price of a more searching vision, or his gaze must be shallow

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[1] XI. 273.

[2] XI. 262; cf. X. 104; also W. A. Dunn, Strassburg Diss. p. 84. (bibl. 26).

[3] XI. 290.

[4] XIII. 335.

[5] V. 207.

[6] III. 469.

and without intellectual revelation."[1] Nor does it surprise us now to read in the *Memorial Suspiria*: ". . : Accept . . . three or four illustrations from my own experience" (not 'from my opium-dreams'), and then to find coming after, vivid personal remembrances organised in the rich style.[2] Finally, it will now startle us less to discover this secretive man hiding in a foot-note to that paper which he calls a key to the whole course of his dreams, these words: "There is no great wonder that a vision which occupied my waking thoughts in those years" — i. e., in Oxford — "should reappear in my dreams. It was, in fact, a legend recurring in sleep, most of which I had myself silently written or sculptured in my daylight reveries."[3]

But really, as we have seen, no important portion of the prose poetry was published, or, as far as can be determined, was written, before De Quincey had at last broken from his thrall, and considered himself in normal mental condition, and was untrammelled by any pressure for money.[4] We can, accordingly, leave this problem, unable to find any positive effect of the drug upon the imaginative prose in general, or, in particular, upon the *Dream Fugue*.

[1] XIII. 351.
[2] 352 ff.
[3] XIII. 369; cf. III. 437, l. 36.
[4] cf. *L.* 257.

III.

Inner Form of the Prose Poetry.

"The dreaming organ", says De Quincey, "in connexion with the heart, the eye, and the ear, composes the magnificent apparatus which forces the infinite into the chambers of a human brain."[1] Disregarding in this a certain grandiloquence, which may not indeed arise wholly from absence of context, we notice that the author has here named, with the inner sensibilities, two special senses as directly concerned in the production of dreams, — and, presumably, of his dreams. It will be recalled how the argument of the first chapter turned largely upon a chosen number of sounds, and again, to what extent the question of visual representation came to the front in the second chapter. In interpreting our author, these two senses, the most important, may be supposed to stand for the whole sensory organism. While De Quincey's meaning in the passage just quoted seems not eminently lucid in some respects, it is clear enough as far as touches his naming these external senses.

In studying our author's "impassioned" compositions, what is addressed in them to the senses rather, we may term *outer form.* What is found ultimately offered to the inner 'sensibilities', — as De Quincey seems to regard the vague internal goal of his poetic activity[2] — may receive the name of *inner form.* It is scarcely necessary to remark upon the implicit connection of these two elements or phases of literary composition, a connection like that between the soul and the senses, or, on the other hand, to make a long justification of separating them for purposes of interpretation.

Of the inner form of the *Dream Fugue* De Quincey has fortunately given his own partial exposition,[3] and to a certain extent saved his student from entering

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[1] XIII. 335.
[2] cf. *D.* 17.
[3] XIII. 271—2; cf. 328—330; *D.* 27—28.

unguided upon an ever arduous task. In 1854, in his *Postscript* to the *Mail-Coach*, our author, after expressing surprise that critics had found anything incongruous about the sequence of ideas in the third section of the paper, endeavors to explain the succession of incidents and elements therein according to the law of mental association; then finally admits, with some weakness, that "if there be anything amiss," we must "let the Dream be responsible. The Dream is a law to itself."[1] For the law of objective causality, consequently, we are not encouraged to look; although, in consideration of De Quincey's stress on the basis of actual fact on which the dream rested, we might not expect it to be wholly absent. Following the drift of our previous chapter, we may not be willing to shoulder too much responsibility upon the dream; if, however, either it or the dreamer be "the responsible party", the psychology of the author himself should afford some explanation of the written product.

De Quincey complained that opium had reduced his power to abstract, and to contemplate the related parts of any entirety.[2] Whether he had originally a really epoch-marking sort of ability as a continuous thinker is one of those things which only an intrepid person would care to answer. While he often displays no little acumen in reasoning, and while we have Wordsworth's high opinion of the good sense in De Quincey's share of the paper on *The Convention of Cintra*,[3] and some favorable notice on Ricardo's part of our author's earlier economic studies,[4] it must be confessed that the latter's writings are, as a whole, characterised, not by their logical form and sequence, but, on the contrary, by their digressions upon associated ideas. Sometimes the threads of suggestion are in truth slender.

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[1] XIII. 329—330.
[2] III. 431; cf. III. 76—7; Brit. Quart. Rev. 66:432 (bibl. 70) *M.*
[3] *L.* 108.
[4] cf. IX. 7. *M.*

Now the *Dream Fugue* is free enough from digressions, although the author could not forbear appending two short, more or less unnecessary notes to it.[1] *Levana*, on the other hand, is not so fortunate as regards continuity, while *Savannah La Mar* lacks poise because of the long metaphysical discussion in it on the infinite divisibility of time.[2] To select the *Dream Fugue* from among these, for purposes of study, is to place De Quincey in a comparatively good light as far as concerns unity in his particular quality of lyric. And yet this paper can in no wise be said to display any strong internal structure such as one would dignify with the name logical.[3] There are, in all, five sub-sections of the *Dream Fugue*, with an introductory paragraph, — a sort of prelude. Of the five, the first two must be taken together; similarly the last two; the third or central section, as regards any plot or scheme of the whole, is almost a disconnected unit: while the development of the first two sections does not proceed in the fourth and fifth. And, indeed, it is already finished, and could not be carried further. Moreover, we cannot altogether well suppose that the first three sections were largely suggested by matters connected with the mail-coach: their scenery and setting are of the sea and seashore, and could not readily arise from impressions of the Bath road, or a vehicle drawn by horses. De Quincey says in his *Postscript:* "So far as I know, every element in the shifting movements of the Dream derived itself either primarily from the incidents of the actual scene, or from secondary features associated with the mail;"[4] but the elements that he mentions and explains, the *cathedral aisle, horn, Dying Trumpeter,*[5] are to be found chiefly in the last two sections. The five sections are placed together properly enough, because the same theme of sudden death reigns in them all. All three separate parts which we have designated

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[1] XIII. 318, 323.
[2] XIII. 360—361.
[3] cf. XIII. 328.
[4] XIII. 330.
[5] ibid.

have in each case the same climax, expressed in almost exactly the same words, that is, in a refrain[1] which is one of the most evident of the artifices by which the author brings about a certain external unity in his paper. And when we take up any one of these parts singly, we find also a similarity in the very simple development that it shows. For example, the first two sections, namely our first part: there begins a scene of peace and beauty, then a sudden change takes place, and there comes a scene of some vague dread and sorrow.[2] And that is the sum total.

We should, however, gain little by talking long of objective or strong logical unity of design in a case where there is practically no plot. There is, one may say, neither the presence of such design, nor, on the other hand, anything illogical or self-contradictory in the *Dream Fugue.* The production is simply unoffending and neutral in this respect. For *that* indeed we may hold the dream or the dreamer responsible. Nevertheless, there is a unity in it, and there are evidences enough of design of a certain sort.

If we cannot find a developing action running through the whole *Dream Fugue,* what can we say of the element of inner form next in order of importance? In speaking of character, we come immediately upon a bond between the parts of this paper. It will be recalled what was noticed in the first chapter as an internal characteristic of the "impassioned prose" in general.[3] De Quincey is always personally concerned in it, at the least as an observer whose interest and conscious presence we are not allowed to forget. In addition, in the Dream Fugue, — as elsewhere in the dreams — there are personages whose function is to answer De Quincey's questionings. The type of these is *The Dark Interpreter* in *Savannah La Mar,* a kind of second self, who acts as a guide through the submerged

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[1] cf. *D.* 49, 50.
[2] cf. XIII. 319—321.
[3] cf. *D.* 16.

city, and answers aloud the mental queries of the first or chief self.[1] In the *Dream Fugue*, the author's personality enters subjectively into the companions crowned with laurel, into the fiery horses too, and even into the flying equipage itself. The minor characters not subjective play no great part. We may say that aside from the dreamer himself there is but one other main personage, or that there are at most two.

This single or dual nature is interesting to study. As might be supposed from such preliminary, it is by no means a very definite character. It is of female sex, innocent, beautiful, and young. It appears in the prelude to the *Dream Fugue;*[2] we find it in some sort of shadowy danger in the first section, see it encountering the peril of death in the following four; it escapes in the fourth and the last. In the fourth it is at first a rosy child, but, in a quick transition of the vision, it has become grown to full young-womanhood. We are led in the *Postscript* to believe that the basis of this character was the young woman saved in the accident that is described in *The Vision of Sudden Death.* Her existence, however, offers no explanation for the appearance of the same being as a little child.

As a matter of fact, some character such as this appears in almost all the "impassioned prose", as well as in other writings of De Quincey, — those, for example, that occasionally "rise to a higher key". Our author himself, in 1854, mentions the repeated presence in the dreams of the *Confessions*, of a person with "the same leading traits . . . of a lost Pariah woman, and of some shadowy malice which withdrew her, or attempted to withdraw her, from restoration and from hope," — a presence due, we are to understand, to the memory of "Ann of Oxford Street", who befriended him, half-starved as he was, in London.[3] Without great astonish-

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[1] XIII. 360; cf. Posthumous Works, Ed. Japp, pp. 7, 9 (bibl. 8).

[2] XIII. 318.

[3] III. 222.

ment one observes something with a general similarity, occupying his "waking thoughts" as well. If we turn to the *Memorial Suspiria* and the 'three or four illustrations from his own experience',[1] we shall see a series of young women in the midst of sorrow, and little girls who are destined to lives of trouble, — none with a psychology carefully elaborated. It is marvellous how often this general character starts up, when one begins to watch for its appearance. *Murder as One of the Fine Arts* contains danger after danger, frequently ending in death, threatening young women and children. *The Spanish Military Nun*, a production that De Quincey valued highly,[2] is the history of flight after flight, pursuit following on pursuit, in which a young woman passes her youth and early womanhood, facing sudden death in every form. *Joan of Arc*, another paper toward which our author showed partiality, suggests by its name the age and sex of the principal character; we know the story of her early martyrdom.

But especially in the writings designated by De Quincey as "impassioned prose" is it that the young female plays a part. *The Daughter of Lebanon*, whose prototype was "Ann of Oxford Street", *The Affliction of Childhood*, *The Memorial Suspiria*, — in short, the *Suspiria* as a whole, and a part of the lyric passages in the *Confessions*, contain this personification of female frailness, as young woman, maiden, or little child.[3] The children in the poetic prose are nearly all female, except in the cases where De Quincey himself appears as a child. We have seen in the *Dream Fugue* and the *Memorial Suspiria* how readily a young child suggests to our author the image of the same individual in first maturity. It is characteristic of his mental workings. De Quincey rarely pictures to himself older people. In the *Dream Fugue* the dreamer is indistinctly known to be a youth; in other portions of the "impassioned

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[1] XIII. 352; cf. *D.* 41.
[2] *L.* 266.
[3] cf. Posthumous Works. Ed. Japp p. 16 ff. (bibl. 8).

prose" he does not figure as a mature and powerful man. It seems that our author much prefers the age of innocence. In *Savannah La Mar* "The Dark Interpreter" speaks of the glorious uses to which God puts the sorrow of an infant, — referring to De Quincey's experiences — and calls him, not one of the strong sons, but one of the "mysterious children" of the earth.[1] This also is characteristic.

The presence of a young girl in his visions our author explains chiefly through the recollection of Ann the unfortunate;[2] but we know that any female who suffers under a similar blight awakens his sympathy and abides in his memory.[3] For the recurrence of a child in his dreams we may account in part by the impression which he says the deaths of two little sisters made upon him when himself very young.[4] The second died at the age of nine, when he, though only seven, had already a precocious sense of the pang of separation. From the amplification given to the scenes of her burial, and from the powerful expressions of sorrow repeated in our author's works, one would consider this as a very great grief in his life. However, when De Quincey speaks of his inability ever to rediscover Ann, his young London benefactress, "This," he says, "amongst such troubles as most men meet with in this life, has been my heaviest affliction."[5] Yet listen to his words on the death of little Catharine Wordsworth, his three-year-old playfellow. She died when De Quincey was about twenty-five. It shows his extreme fondness for her, and illustrates perhaps his love for all young children, certainly his susceptibility to any present grief, when he calls this the first heavy wound that he sustained in his affections, and the deadly carelessness of her nurse, the cause of his first drinking deeply from the cup of bitterness.[6] His sorrow on

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[1] XIII. 361.
[2] III. 222.
[3] cf. XIII. 131—2.
[4] I. *The Affliction of Childhood.*
[5] III. 375.
[6] XIII. 148, *M*; cf. Tait's Mag. Sept. 1839.

hearing of her death is in one place described at some length: "Never, perhaps, from the foundations of those mighty hills, was there so fierce a convulsion of grief as mastered my faculties on receiving that heart-shattering news. Over and above my excess of love for her, I had always viewed her as an impersonation of the dawn and the spirit of infancy." — "She . . . died," he says, "in the early dawn, just as the first gleams of morning began to appear above Seat Sandel and Fairfield, about an hour, perhaps, before sunrise."[1] Anyone who will compare with the passage cited, the third section of the *Dream Fugue*, especially toward the end, can scarcely fail to see the resemblance, and will probably be ready to admit that, if Wordsworth's little daughter in some way entered our author's visions, her appearance at all events in the text of this third section of the paper in question, could not have been wholly involuntary on the dreamer's part, — unless his excellent memory for favorite passages of other authors failed to extend to his own productions. We have here, apparently, material somewhat foreign to the Bath road environs. It is unlikely that the three-year-old child was ever near the mail-coach route. One observes, however, that the girl in the third section is somewhat older, — able to run swiftly: a transition in age that we have noted as characteristic in De Quincey's mind. Actually, a little child appears but once in the *Dream Fugue*, i. e., in the fourth section.[2]

In *The Vision of Sudden Death*, where he describes the actual events that formed the groundwork of at least a part, as we may suppose, of the *Dream Fugue*, our author portrays the young woman as at first helpless and motionless. But, when the danger was at its height, "she rose and sank upon her seat, sank and rose, threw up her arms wildly to heaven, clutched at some visionary object in the air, fainting, praying,

[1] II. 443.
[2] XIII. 324.

raving, despairing."[1] This calls up some sort of a picture to the eye, and stirs no doubt the 'sensibilities'; but the reader is left without much idea of marked characteristics in the young person. As we proceed in the prelude, this personage, there said to be recurrent in our author's visions, is still described in a general way only. Her form is "Ionic", her foot "arching", her eyes are upraised, she is agitated, shuddering; she is suffering the "passion of sudden death."[2] In the first section the female personage is called simply "the unknown lady from the dreadful vision"; her innocence, weakness, loveliness, are to be inferred from the tone of her surroundings, — from the "fairy pinnace", "young companions", "tropic flowers"; the vague danger only by the sudden change from sunlight to darkness, and the disappearance of the revellers, the flowers and the vintage.[3] In the next section the character is discovered on a frigate, aloft amongst the shrouds, "with hair dishevelled, one hand clutched amongst the tackling — rising, sinking, fluttering, trembling, praying";[4] the remainder of the picture is appropriate setting. In the third section we have the young girl running in panic on a solitary strand. She wears a garland of white roses about her head. Suddenly she is in the quicksands, her person buried, only the garlanded head visible. Last of all is visible "one white marble arm . . . . tossing, faltering, rising, clutching, as at some false deceiving hand stretched out from the clouds, ... uttering her dying hope, and then her dying despair."[5] In the fourth section comes the little child unconscious of an approaching danger; mysteriously she is snatched away from before her peril; then suddenly grown to woman's stature, she is seen clinging to an altar high above in the cathedral, — voiceless, "sinking, rising, raving, despairing."[6] These words are repeated at the close of the paper, where

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[1] XIII. 317.
[2] XIII. 318.
[3] XIII. 319—320.
[4] XIII. 320.
[5] XIII. 321.
[6] XIII. 324—5.

this frequently recurring figure is once more mentioned, and thus vaguely described again.[1]

A certain indistinctness is no doubt allowable in portraying "the shadowy world of dreams", and the absence of positive description of personages, De Quincey might well enough claim to be suited to the nature of his production. But this remarkable confusion of ages, infancy, girlhood, young womanhood, is not entirely to be explained in this way. The author's conception could not have been entirely clear, and he is to a certain extent a "responsible party." Considering the girl or female child, together with the dreamer, as the chief figures throughout the poetic prose, one cannot say that the main actors possess truly impressive traits. Their weakness and their excess of demonstration, their impotence of will, and inability to contend against circumstances; De Quincey's own powerlessness, recalling his confessed want of command in the real mail-coach accident; the very fact that most of the characters recurring in his imaginative writings are of the weaker sex, often at the weakest age; — all these things must weigh against our admiration. What sort of person he held in estimation imaginatively, may be gathered from his words on *The Spanish Military Nun,* a powerful nature, daring to struggle with fate. "Catalina", he says, " . . . does not belong to that class of persons in whom pre-eminently I profess an interest."[2] Gentleness and innocence are what he loves.

On the other hand, this hazy figure that floats in our author's vision has still a genuine worth for its purity and escaping beauty. And the minor characters are more powerful. The "man at the mast-head" with his darkening countenance, the "angry horses", fiery and swift, the "Dying Trumpeter", the "delivering angel", the myriads of chanting choristers, the innumerable dead kindling into life, are of a sublime sort. Nevertheless the very fact that the superior excellences exist in these secondary forms indicates an imperfection.

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[1] XIII. 326.
[2] XIII. 165.

Accordingly, neither in an inmost, comprehensive plot is it that we are to look for a unity of inner form, nor in the main personages can we discover strength and fulness of character; but in the chief characters we find some connection for the separate parts of the *Dream Fugue*, and in the minor some compensatory robustness of nature.

IV.

Conceptions Recurring in the Prose Poetry.

A feminine personality more or less vague, and the theme of death, especially sudden death, are evidently not confined in De Quincey's writings to the *Dream Fugue*, but form the center of interest in many of his papers. They may well be considered as prominent among the constituent elements of his imaginative make-up. If, for example, he is called upon to write his recollections, — as in *Early Memorials of Grasmere*, or the *Memorial Suspiria* — one notices how the former straightway enters in. The frequency with which it occurs in *Murder as One of the Fine Arts* also, may easily be observed[1]; and we scarcely need say that the remarkable production in question repeats in varied forms the idea of sudden death.

As has been noticed, closely connected with the mental picture of a young girl is that of a female child; the two are bound up, so to speak, in one vague representation of female youth; and this, in turn, is, in our author's train of association, not far distant from the idea of infancy in general. De Quincey's similes and comparisons, his single phrases, show his fondness for the latter conception. We read of "pebbly 'becks' . . . not too broad for a child's flying leap",[2] of fences lowered

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[1] cf. XIII. 75, 78, 81, 82, 143, 303.
[2] XIII. 127.

sufficiently "for female, or even for childish, steps to pass",[1] and the like. Similarly our author names his papers *The Affliction of Childhood*, *The Literature of Infancy*, and, completely in accordance with this phase of his mind, he considers the thoughts of our infancy "our sublimer thoughts."[2] In that production in which the "Dark Interpreter" calls De Quincey one of the "mysterious children of the earth", it is related, "together we searched the silent nurseries, where the children were all asleep, and *had* been asleep through five generations."[3] The adult portion of the city's dormant population escapes mention.

We shall see that not only the main ideas of the *Dream Fugue* repeat themselves in other portions of the prose lyric, but the whole web of minor conceptions, and, to some extent, the stock of expressions, in this particular prose poem is from a tissue or fund common to all De Quincey's lyric. The name *Dream Fugue* itself, with its implied repetitions, embodies a general peculiarity of our author's "impassioned" production. Accordingly, in a sort of middle ground between inner and outer form it is that the unity, not merely of the *Dream Fugue*, but of the entire poetic prose is found. Recurring conceptions, of not the greatest profundity, and little developed, yet not without considerable variety of combination, and by no means unattractive in themselves, compose the core of that artistic form for which the 'Opium-Eater' is famous.

Character and style are so closely related that men have often felt inclined to identify them. In as much as the "impassioned" productions are confessedly subjective, and because what De Quincey has said of the reign of the law of association in one of them[4] serves to a large measure to characterise both them all and the mind that brought them forth, there cannot be exhibited any great degree of logical necessity in

[1] XIII. 139.
[2] XIII. 311.
[3] XIII. 360.
[4] cf. *D.* 43.

the order of these ideas as we shall present them. Our procedure must follow the facts, not constrain them. However, in projecting a treatment as systematic as possible, one may separate, even in this middle region, between those repeating conceptions which appeal to the "sensibilities",[1] and those which, one supposes, were accustomed to suggest to our author oral, visual, and similar external sensations. That is, even here we may observe the distinction of *more* and *less* subjective, albeit the conceptions noted are all peculiar and characteristic in De Quincey.

Our author credited himself with an unusual gift "for feeling in a moment the secret analogies or parallelisms that connected things else apparently remote."[2] We add this as a further indication of De Quincey's mental subjection to the law of association. Another fitting preparatory observation bears on the nature of this law in general. In its various modes, — time, place, quantity, quality, — it acts, first, through similarity and partial identity; on the other hand, secondly, through striking dissimilarity, that contains nevertheless some partial likeness. From the standpoint of this principle, the *Dream Fugue* offers as a primary trait that very recurrence of similar elements which we have been noticing. Most appropriately did the author name his literary production after a peculiar branch of a kindred art. But we have said that the term is suggestive of the entire range of his "impassioned prose." De Quincey himself furnishes a hint of this, in saying that the conception of a search, of a repeated flight and repeated pursuit, reappears constantly in his dreams.[3]

The law displays itself also in its negative aspect. Opposites readily suggest each other to our author. Life and death, summer and death, strife and reconciliation, — contrasts, let us say, for the 'sensibilities', — light

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[1] cf. *D.* 17.
[2] III. 332.
[3] III. 222.

and darkness, sound and "aboriginal silence",[1] — opposites appealing to the senses — are among the numerous, often-repeated examples. In light and its absence lies an opposition whose frequency, here noted, may stand as representative for the frequency of many others which space forbids detailing. We have already read of the impression made on our author's eye by the "grand effects .... between lamplight and the darkness upon solitary roads".[2] One could compare with this numberless similar expressions, as well outside the *Mail-Coach* paper as in it. For instance, in *The Daughter of Lebanon*: "Up rose the sun on the thirtieth morning in all his pomp, but suddenly was darkened by driving storms".[3] The contrast in question occurs in abundance; we shall spare further citation. Perhaps it will suffice in illustration of the general point involved to add De Quincey's own observation upon "the antagonism between the tropical redundancy of life in summer, and the frozen sterilities of the grave",[4] — an antithesis that is anything but rare in the prose poems, — and to recall what the author says of the way in which good and evil natures developed alternately from each other in his visions, and of his own inability to escape the hateful part of these associations.[5]

Closely connected with the second, the negative, side of the foregoing principle is the principle of negatives in general. Our author's usage of such expressions is rich and striking. Later we shall speak of a characteristic idea in De Quincey, namely, the interpretation of negative, or, as he once calls them, "averted" signs, the oracular reading of actions or passions that are denied, so to speak, articulate or legible expression.[6] Here, however, we refer more particularly to the formation of privative adjectives.

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[1] cf. XIII. 325.
[2] XIII. 271.
[3] III. 453.
[4] I. 38; cf I. 125–6; *De Quincey*, Masson, 107 (bibl. 9).
[5] XIII. 290, 291.
[6] cf. *D.* 61.

These are often connected with the distinctive concepts that we are noticing. For example, in the general cycle of contrast between motion and tranquillity, we find the adjective, *restless*,[1] in that between sound and silence, *voiceless*,[2] and so on; or, related to the ruling idea of infancy, may be observed the remarkable conceit, "memoirs of the unborn".[3]

In our first chapter we dealt somewhat with the melody of De Quincey's lyric. We find that the conscious idea of music arises frequently in his "impassioned prose". *Music*, the word itself, is a favorite with him. Again, as may be noticed in our second chapter, we meet so many instances of *dream* or *vision*, both in the writings of the third class and out of them, that this conception also must be considered a habitual resident of our author's mind. Next, it was concluded that the main characters of the *Dream Fugue*, at least aside from the dreamer himself, had best be looked upon as mere recurrent types or undeveloped conceptions, that is, of youth, female youth, childhood, in the more or less undifferentiated forms in which they pictured themselves to De Quincey. Death, above all, sudden death, also, is remarked as repeating itself, and, with the foregoing, may be added to the list which we shall give.

The number of these conceptions is not large. In the whole range of the "impassioned prose", there is hardly one which cannot be discovered within the compass of the *Dream Fugue*. The *Pariah*, a figure that often floats behore De Quincey's fancy, a sort of symbol of human degradation consciously undeserved, crept into the last section of the Blackwood *Dream Fugue*,[4] but in the numerous changes which this section especially underwent in revision, the idea was omitted.[5]

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1 XIII. 322 ll. 14, 19.

2 XIII. 325.

3 cf. XIII. 322—3, 366, where a number of powerful negatives occur.

4 Blackwood's Mag. Dec. 1849, p. 755.

5 cf. XIII. 326.

This figure comes forward in many places in our author's works, and is once explained at some length in sober prose.[1] With other unclear characters of our author's lyric, it lies under the stigma of the word *pathetic*.

The list following contains words that stand for the more important recurring conceptions, leaving out some already mentioned. It bears a resemblance to the examples of vocabulary noted in our first chapter; variation occurs, partly in order to offer, altogether, a larger nucleus of De Quincey's elemental ideas, and so to outline a fuller interpretation of our author. Such a list ought to furnish keys not only to his style, but to his character as well, showing, as it does, what his chief mental phases were. Corresponding to the division proposed above, of more and less subjective, it may be divided in two. With each word, double references are given, one to an occurrence in the *Dream Fugue*, the other to an occurrence elsewhere in the prose poetry.

Mystery XIII. 321 l 3, I. 39 l 15; *secrecy* XIII. 321 l 36, XIII. 367 l 25; *hieroglyphics (signs)* XIII. 318 l 24, III. 271 l 30; *malice* XIII. 320 l 21, XIII. 339 l 10; *treachery* XIII. 321 l 38, XIII. 367 l 18; *sudden* XIII. 323 l 23, XIII. 442 l 39; *agitation* Blackwood Dec. 1849 754 l 89, I. 50 l 22; *passion* XIII. 318 l 23, I. 49 l 1; *panic* XIII. 318 l 25, XIII. 226 l 34; *flight* XIII. 324 l 25, I. 42 l 16; *pursuit* XIII. 326 l 18, XIII. 208 l 2; *peril* XIII. 321 l 15, XIII. 184 l 18; *strife* XIII. 322 l 6, I. 34 l 15; *deliverance* XIII. 323 l 13; I. 47 l 23; *reconciliation* XIII. 324 l 12, III. 445 l 18; *tranquillity* XIII. 319 l 12, XIII. 360 ll 15, 16; *peace* XIII. 326 l 27, XIII. 360 l 15; *serenity* XIII. 319 l 12, XIII. 360 ll 16; *solitude* XIII. 321 l 32, I. 46 l 1; *sleep* XIII. 326 l 33, III. 446 l 6; *final* XIII. 327 l 3, III. 446 l 12.

One observes that the mere reading these words, even in this very slight arrangement, does not fail to

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[1] I. 100; cf. I. 125—6; also Japp, Posthumous Works, 6 (bibl. 8).

affect our 'sensibilities'. Among the more objective conceptions repeated in the prose poems, and characteristic of our author, are those connected with the following words.

Angel XIII. 325 l 35, XIII. 361 l 16; *cathedral (church)* XIII. 323 l 8, I. 46 l 27; *organ* XIII. 323 l 10, I. 46 l 28; *silence* XIII. 325 l 4, XIII. 360 l 23; *whisper* XIII. 322 l 7, XIII. 204 l 20; *armies* XIII. 326 l 35, III. 446 l 11; *frost* XIII. 325 l 10, I. 40 l 39; *sun* XIII. 325 l 14, I. 50 l 15; *light* XIII. 321 l 8, XIII. 361 l 15; *dawn* XIII. 321 l 6, XIII. 360 l 26; *golden* XIII. 326 l 34, I. 42 l 7; *flowers* XIII. 319 l 22, III. 452 l 1; *clouds* XIII. 326 l 25, I. 47 l 16; *savannah* XIII. 319 l 12; XIII. 359 l 28.

This double list, with the ideas noticed previously, is exhaustive enough, the repetitions spoken of are frequent enough, to show that, in the "impassioned prose", our author's originality, however powerful within its limits, was yet confined within narrow lines. One single paper, the *Dream Fugue,* may well be called a mosaic, in which practically all the materials De Quincey could draw from himself are cemented together.

As it would he useless, and, for brevity's sake, impossible for us to deal with all these conceptions separately and in detail, we shall offer first what seem to be pertinent and illuminative remarks on the list as a whole, and then, selecting several highly dictinctive and salient points, *nuclei,* so to speak, let the exposition of them throw further light on the rest, and the frequency, so evident, of the conceptions concerned indicate that of others.

The tendency toward grouping, seen at least in the first part of the list, corresponds to cycles of association in De Quincey's mind. For example, mystery and secrecy and the semi-oracular interpretation of vague signs, whereby what is hidden, evasive, malicious, may be revealed, are more or less bound up together. Sudden crises and consequent agitation — changing into panic; then a flight overtaken by a pursuit, a strife and an unawaited deliverance or reconciliation, — this followed

by serenity and peace, — form a typical orbit through which our author's thoughts tend to move. Children and the dawn, dawn and growing light, light and golden color, gold and a glorious sunshine, show other characteristic mental paths; then, as we have noted, comes the binding together of opposites; for instance, dawn and death. The dawn is ordinarily *early*: we read in the third section of the *Dream Fugue*, "The morning twilight even then was breaking".[1] Similarly, when time of life is referred to, it is for the most part *early*. How unerringly we may trace some associations in De Quincey perhaps the following example will show. One of his papers is entitled *Early Memorials of Grasmere.* As Masson rightly explains, this does not mean "'Memoirs of Grasmere in Early Times', or 'Antiquities of Grasmere', or anything of that kind". This editor adds: "It is to De Quincey himself ..... that the word 'Early' has reference; and *A Tale of Grasmere when I first knew it* would be a more exact" (if less euphonious) "title".[2] We can here well observe how our author is led to draw on his favorite vocabulary, even when the word *early* renders his meaning obscure to the ordinary reader. Other titles and "motives" show how his peculiar ideas were continually rising to the surface of his consciousness. Thus, among the sub-headings in *The Spanish Military Nun*: *Bright Gleams of Sunshine*; *The Sunshine is Overcast*,[3] etc.

The various conceptions brought together in the *Dream Fugue* are found more scatteringly, but characteristically, throughout the rest of our author's works. In *The Revolt of a Tartar Tribe* one of them is developed at some length. This whole paper is the narrative of a flight and a pursuit, a search and a chase, as De Quincey opportunely finds them in history. With great success he treats a material peculiarly adapted to his genius.[4] In this or that portion of the poetic prose,

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[1] XIII. 321.
[2] XIII. 125. *M.*
[3] XIII. 188—9; cf. 180, 186.
[4] cf. VII. 8, 9. *M.*

however, numbers of these conceptions are collected, some here, some there, in changing combination. In one short passage we note such words as *suddenly, solitary, signal, peace, pursuing,* connected with the vocabulary and ideas reigning in the third class of our author's productions; the passage as a whole is suggestive of the *Dream Fugue*.[1]

De Quincey calls the species of prose under consideration "impassioned", a term of which he was fond, and one which he applies to poetical productions in general.[2] However, a glance at the conceptions that we have been observing, a moment of thought over the absence of objective cause in his way of uniting them, convinces us that in this case some word less assuming were better chosen. Passion we conceive of as something burning and growing, changeable indeed, but not capable of sudden reconciliation, or of composing itself in an instant to serenity and peace. Some expression joining the idea of an ornate prose with that of an effect upon the "sensibilities"[3] would nearer symbolise the essence of the third class. Our author's lyric hardly deserves to be dignified by entrance among works of passion. On the other hand, it must not be degraded too far by the term *sensuous*. That word may be applied to it with some limitations.

Of the recurring conceptions which we select as typical, let us observe first of all that connected with the word *hieroglyphics*. Reading of signs, interpretation of a succession of events on the surface unmeaning but at bottom symbolic, is a process in which De Quincey greatly delighted, and one that must have been congenial to a mind possessed of a lightning-like rapidity in grasping underlying and elusive similarities. The word *hieroglyphics*, so common with our author, doubtless pleased his ear, and it calls up also vague visual sensations to the reader; but it is not for the senses

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[1] XIII. 203; cf. III. 271, 292, 338, 343—4, 395—6, 444—6.
[2] cf. I. 194.
[3] cf. *D.* 17.

chiefly. With De Quincey it is rather on the order of a negative idea, and, involved as such in a mental denial of some positive, it is properly classed among the more subjective of his concepts. Matters seemingly without significance, apparently disjointed circumstances, are by a sudden effort of his mind thrown into relation, and forced, in their very paucity and slenderness of indication, to render up an unmistakable story. The idea is soon found in the *Dream Fugue*, in the words, "Passion of sudden death! that once in youth I read and interpreted by the shadows of thy averted signs!" To this the author appends a note: "'*Averted signs*': — I read the course and changes of the lady's agony in the succession of her involuntary gestures; but it must be remembered that I read all this from the rear . . ."[1] This typical instance has many parallels. In *Murder as One of the Fine Arts* we find, for example: "It is really wonderful . . . to notice the absolute certainty with which the silent hieroglyphics of the case betray to us the whole process"; and, on the same page: ". . . when all is over let us come back . . . and read the dreadful record of all that has passed."[2] Again, as we follow the murderer, we discover ourselves "Reading his acts by the light of such mute traces as he left behind him."[3] Once more: "the silent language of the fact made its own eloquent revelation."[4] Passing over some less striking instances in this paper, and for convenience taking the next in the same volume,[5] namely, *Early Memorials of Grasmere*, we may observe such expressions as: "reading into coherency the sad hieroglyphics of their last agonies, it was conjectured . . ."[6]; and, shortly after, ". . . by whatever sad language of sounds or signs, positive or negative, she might have learned or guessed her loss . . ."[7],

[1] XIII. 318.
[2] XIII. 85.
[3] XIII. 107.
[4] XIII. 111.
[5] i. e. Vol. XIII.
[6] XIII. 140.
[7] XIII. 141.

and so on. The next paper of the same volume is *The Spanish Military Nun,* in which the idea still continually shows itself. Thus, "It was at vespers ... that she finally read the secret signal for her departure ..."[1] So also note the "solitary Arab's tent, rising with saintly signals of peace in the dreadful desert."[2] Expressions such as "a few final signs", "significant pantomime", "dreadful dumb-show"[3] are related instances from the same production. We take these examples all from a portion of one volume, as an easy way of showing how frequent the conception is. It appears at every corner. We open at random a volume of critical writings, and see De Quincey reading at one point in *The Tempest,* "as in subtile hieroglyphics, the secret record of Shakspeare's own nuptial disappointments."[4] Regarding the prose poetry more particularly, we may call attention to the fact that "the famous Spectre of the Brocken" with his "mute symbols",[5] is an extended embodiment of the idea. We have made note of the "Dark Interpreter" in *Savannah La Mar;* he is De Quincey's negative or shade, who with motions and whispers, more rarely with a chorus voice, gives mysterious utterance to the dreamer's half-framed thoughts.[6]

Next we may consider a conception perhaps quite as common with our author, namely, the flight of time. On the side of briefness of duration we note the word *suddenly*, which, *copulae*, pronouns, and particles excepted, is probably the most used in De Quincey's vocabulary. Instantaneous effects, unexpected turns, abrupt transitions, are means by which, for want often of deep-lying, solid, and lasting motive, the author works upon our 'sensibilities'. With De Quincey practically all contrasts are sudden contrasts. At the very end of *The Vision of Sudden Death,* where the principle of

[1] XIII. 164.
[2] XIII. 203; cf. 205, 207, 214.
[3] XIII. 225—6.
[4] IV. 54.
[5] I. 54.
[6] XIII. 360—1.

suspense is employed to great advantage, this word occurs three times in quick succession and with powerful effect.[1] Shortly after, in the first section of the *Dream Fugue* is another striking example: "Ah, what a wilderness of floral beauty was hidden, or was suddenly revealed, upon the tropic islands through which the pinnace moved!"[2] — an apostrophe that shows similarity to the description in *The Daughter of Lebanon* of "a woman of loveliness so transcendent, that, when suddenly revealed, as now, out of deepest darkness, she appalled men as a mockery",[3] as well as to the exclamation in *The Spanish Military Nun*, "Oh! verdure of dark olive foliage, offered suddenly to fainting eyes."[4] We may conclude the examples of this word, by giving an instance which, like that above for the word *early*,[5] discovers how our author was at times betrayed by his mannerisms. We refer to a place where, having made use of the adverb *suddenly* in its more common position at the opening of a clause, he explains it parenthetically as meaning one or two months' time. The case is somewhat ridiculous.[6]

On the other hand, the slow elapsing of counted hours, but more often and noticeably the passing of minutes and seconds, is likewise characteristic in our author's narratives. We meet an instance at the end of the first section of the *Dream Fugue*: "... suddenly the man at the mast-head, whose countenance darkened with alarm, cried out, 'Sail on the weather beam! Down she comes upon us: in seventy seconds she also will founder". The scene is completed in the next section: "But in a moment, as she was close upon us, some impulse of a heady current or local vortex gave a wheeling bias to her course, and off she forged without a

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[1] XIII. 318.
[2] XIII. 319; cf. III. 264.
[3] III. 451.
[4] XIII. 203.
[5] *D.* 60.
[6] cf. III. 428.

shock".[1] A laughable parallel to this may be found in *Sortilege and Astrology*, where the young man acting as "dipper" searches the bath-tub which held odds and ends of De Quincey's writings, for something suitable to put into a periodical. De Quincey fearing that an old bill was coming to light, "called out . . . — 'Starboard your helm! you're going smack upon the Goodwins: in thirty seconds you'll founder'. Upon this, in an agony of fright, the dipper forged off . . . . . ."[2] The author seems to be playing here with the previous passage. *Murder as One of the Fine Arts* is replete with counting and dividing of minutes and seconds. We have *thirty, sixty, seventy, ninety seconds, half minutes, two minutes, three minutes,* and so on.[3] One sees in this De Quincey's love of specific details, as well as the poetical sway which figures and measurements had over his imagination. His young girls are nine and sixteen, his young women, twenty-two years old. He offers us definite numbers, sometimes when they are not objectively correct. Thus in *The Affliction of Childhood* he separates most carefully, according to his wont, between his own age and the ages of his little sisters; yet he does not escape an error therein.[4]

With the measurements of time correspond those of what is narrow, attenuated, infinitesimal in space. We read of hairbreadths between almost colliding ships, bridges no broader than a spider's web, pencils of light, and so on. Both sorts of measurements find their expression, the former very fully, in the prose poems; for instance, in *Savannah La Mar*, where the "Dark Interpreter" declaims upon the infinite divisibility of time, until the symmetry of the production is injured.[5]

The next idea to which attention is called is represented by the word *panic*. In the *Dream Fugue* this comes to light immediately. The second clause of

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1 XIII. 320.
2 XIII. 257.
3 cf. XIII. 78, 80, 83, 85, 86, 102, 108, 109, 110, 111.
4 I. 37. *M.*
5 XIII. 360—1.

the prelude apostrophises the "rapture of panic", which, we are told, embodies itself in the recurring dream-figure of a shuddering, fainting female.[1] The idea occurs, naturally, also outside the "impassioned prose". If we turn again to Volume XIII of our author's works, the instances will multiply sufficiently. *Murder as One of the Fine Arts* contains, as might be expected, every sort of panic: "public panic", "prevailing panic", "provincial panic", etc.[2] Then, in *The Spanish Military Nun,* we find Kate "Flying in panic — and behold! there was no man that pursued?"[3] Or, not to extend the instances too far, let us close with the passage: "What succeeded was all one scene of continued, dreadful dumb-show; different passions of panic, or deadly struggle, or hellish malice, absolutely suffocated all articulate utterances",[4] — wherein appear several of the conceptions already marked. Here we see panic; in the next paragraph comes further strife; then follow, of course, the inevitable flight and pursuit.

From the consideration of these ideas, we may now pass on to three of a more objective order, which, nevertheless, because of their frequency may undoubtedly be attributed to the peculiarities of the subject himself.

The first is that of a *church* or *cathedral.* We need scarcely allude to the prominence of this conception in the *Dream Fugue,* and our passing references[5] in the foregoing pages indicate how often the figure passes before our author's mental gaze, beginning, if we take him literally, with his very tender years.[6] We have a little more certain evidence from a letter written when he was fifteen years old, of the impression made upon him at this later age by St. Patrick's in London.[7] There are other proofs that he was

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[1] XIII. 318.
[2] XIII. 75.
[3] XIII. 197.
[4] XIII. 226.
[5] *D.* 4, 38, etc.
[6] I. 46.
[7] *L.* 32.

continually and peculiarly susceptible to this idea in his waking moments.[1] Around it as a center may be grouped a large number of characteristic rhetorical figures and sources of similes. The words *organ, choir, music, Te Deums, reverberations, choristers, aisles,* will remind De Quincey's reader of many a passage in the lyrical prose. For example, in *Savannah La Mar,* "... his voice" (i. e., the 'Dark Interpreter's') "swelled like a *sanctus* rising from the choir of a cathedral".[2] Similarly, in *The Daughter of Lebanon,* we read that the apostle's voice "swelled into the power of anthems".[3]

The anecdote of De Quincey's vision as a boy in the *Whispering Gallery*[4] suggests the second of the more sensory ideas selected, *whispering.* In accordance with the principle of contrast and extremes, our author's characters either sound their sentiments triumphantly aloud, or they whisper, gently communing with themselves. The conception of whispering runs incessantly into De Quincey's phraseology. Thus, in *Murder as One of the Fine Arts:* "... on such a tenure of a whisper was now suspended the murderous malice of the man below";[5] or, "Williams had been whisperingly the object of very deep suspicion".[6] In *The Spanish Military Nun,* we find Kate "going .... just whither and just how the Pacific breezes suggested in the gentlest of whispers";[7] again, "He", God, "has been whispering to her";[8] "Frightful was the spasm of joy which whispered that the worst was over".[9]

The third and last word is *light.* It may be considered the center of a periphery that contains the concepts of *golden, dawn, crimson, sunny,* and several

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1 cf. III. 295.
2 XIII. 361.
3 III. 452.
4 III. 295—6.
5 XIII. 106.
6 XIII. 116.
7 XIII. 187.
8 XIII. 195.
9 XIII. 202.

other simple visual sensations. The light varies from faintest daybreak to the glory of high noon. With it often goes its foe, the darkness; and they two are to be thought of also in connection with another favorite contrast, namely, that between fire and frost. As we have noticed, the light is as a rule *early*.[1] The sentence already quoted from the *Dream Fugue*, "The morning twilight even then was breaking",[2] is characteristic; so also the comparison in *The Spanish Military Nun*, between "golden tales" and "morning mists touched by earliest sunlight".[3] One recalls many similar instances: "She slept till earliest dawn",[4] "meek dove-like dawn",[5] etc. In its gentleness the light is often said to slumber: "The golden sunlight of God slept amongst the heads of his apostles, his martyrs, his saints".[6] Again, the dawn is frequently *golden*, as in the *Dream Fugue*, in the expression, "the gates of the golden dawn".[7] Gates are likewise apt to be golden.[8]

To give an exhaustive exposition of the ways in which De Quincey's elemental conceptions combine and recombine, and how they are involved, often, one in another, would mean to rival in bulk our author's own production. Even in the preceding citations, it seemed unwise to do much more than point out one thing in each single example, although several peculiarities often appeared together. As a closing illustration, however, let us look again at the passage, "What succeeded was all one scene of continued, dreadful dumb show; different passions of panic, or deadly struggle, or hellish malice, absolutely suffocated all articulate utterances".[9] In this we have not merely the divining of a scene that is only

1 cf. *D.* 60.
2 XIII. 321.
3 XIII. 164.
4 XIII. 168.
5 XIII. 230.
6 I. 50; cf. III. 343.
7 XIII. 326.
8 cf. *D.* 14.
9 XIII. 226; cf. *D.* 66.

half brought to light; we have also the fond idea of strife, — malignant strife; thereto is added that of panic; and the whole is wrought together in a conception of "passion", which only too often in De Quincey savors of over-demonstration.

V.

Outer Form of the Prose Poetry.

When De Quincey compares the relation between thought and language in poetry, especially "meditative" or subjective poetry, to that between soul and body, and refers with admiration to Wordsworth's remark that style should be considered, not the dress, but the "incarnation" of ideas, [1] he approaches a truth sufficiently profound and general, yet in his own characteristic way. It is possible to criticise our author too severely on the charge of paying immoderate attention to the perfecting of the external side of his lyric prose; [2] but there can be no doubt that the excellences of his "impassioned" passages do not lie objectively deep. It is typical of De Quincey to seize upon the word "incarnation", to emphasize it, and in other connections to appropriate it without reference to its source. He often speaks of the eye and ear in relation to literature; similarly here, of the embodiment of thought for the senses.

For outer form considered as sentence-building and paragraph structure, we may refer to Minto's excellent treatment in his *Manual of English Prose Literature*, where the non-imaginative works of De Quincey are particularly under observation, but where, also, many suggestive remarks upon our author's style in general are put forth.[3] The paragraphing and sentence-form

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[1] X. 230.

[2] cf. R. B. Johnson. Lyrics in prose by De Q. Preface VIII (bibl. 39).

[3] pp. 50—55 (bibl. 10).

of the prose poetry do not differ from the same elements in the rest of De Quincey's writings radically enough to warrant separate examination.[1] Our remarks on this head are by intention cursory, and scattered as they may best illuminate the kind of outer form we have in view, namely, that side or phase of the "impassioned prose" which concerns the senses.

Our so-called external test for this species of production will be readily recalled from the first chapter.[2] Many praises have been bestowed by admirers upon the melody of our author's lyric, upon the niceness of his ear; his critics rarely fail to note his great obedience to the sway of musical sounds.[3] There is no doubt that De Quincey observed with utmost care the swell and cadence of his sentences. But it must be remembered that when he speaks of the eye and the ear and their connection with his dreaming faculty, he preserves the universal order of their prominence;[4] and, as we have said,[5] these two organs are but representative, with him, of the entire sense apparatus. In De Quincey this latter was as a whole, let us say not highly developed, but intensely exercised.

Granted that the prose poetry, to produce the best effects, should be read aloud, its first appeal, as in the case of all literature, is to the eye. We have in general to distinguish between direct and indirect or suggested impressions. Not until one begins to read aloud, is there anything immediate for the ear. However, the indirect appeals are important for both senses. In order to understand, to appreciate, an author, it is necessary to interpret him not only from the spiritual or intellectual side, but for every faculty that he may stir.

Now, to begin with, as to the direct appeals to the eye, these are, first of all, summed up in the effect of the whole printed page; they consist, in particular, in such

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[1] cf. ibid. Preface, p. I.
[2] *D*. 16, 18, 19.
[3] cf. Minto, pp. 71—72; *L*. 477—8.
[4] XIII. 335.
[5] *D*. 42.

matters as punctuation; e. g., in our author, note the frequent use of the dash and the exclamation point. As to sectioning, we have already spoken of the divisions of the *Dream Fugue*.[1] In the prose poetry generally, unless a section be long, it is likely to be printed without a break, — a way of paragraphing that corresponds probably to the unity of each burst of lyric in the history of its composition. The sentences are for the most part short. Regarding the position of words in the sentence, we may note the tendency to invert demonstrative and personal pronouns used as objects. De Quincey is fond of placing these in italics at the head of his propositions, just as the word *none* at the end. Both usages occur in all his prose, but more noticeably in the "impassioned" parts. They become mannerisms with him.

Next we may consider the indirect appeals. De Quincey sets great store by the "language of the eye".[2] Primarily, the organ in question apprehends light and its absence; through variations in light, color; through variations in the intermittence or absence of light, the idea of sneeessive positions in space, i. e., motion. More simply, the eye perceives figure, motion, and color.

In pure figure, our author is vague. Although he likes certain sets of particulars, such as definite numbers, and notices minute peculiarities in describing persons, in the dreams and elsewhere his pictures of still life are not detailed. Pillars are "mighty", proportions of churches, merely "majestic":[3] the whole cathedral conception never comes to a careful representation. Minto considers De Quincey an 'indifferent' observer of nature,[4] and our author calls himself, perhaps with an application to the point here in question, i. e., still forms, "a poor hand at observing."[5] The uncertainty of the geography in *The Spanish Military Nun* shows his

1 *D.* 44.
2 cf. *D.* 42, etc.
3 I. 46; XIII. 324.
4 Manual of E. P. L. 73 (bibl. 10).
5 III. 306; cf. X. 266.

inability or carelessness in holding fast a visual outline.[1] However, this weakness may be explained in part by another peculiarity: De Quincey rarely conceives of objects as fixed. What appears to him appears in motion, and must thereby lose some distinctness of detail. His vague 'signs' and 'dumb' gesticulations illustrate this.[2] His armies march, his light "searches and runs", his fleecy clouds 'wheel and career',[3] — just as his "phantom cavalry careered, flying and pursuing";[4] his "turrets and terraces", in the Dream Fugue, "stride forward with haughty intrusion", and "run back with mighty shadows into answering recesses",[5] — a wonderful transferrence of the ego's own motion to immovable objects. The recurrent feminine figure is instinct with signs and gestures, "sinking, fluttering, trembling, praying",[6] — like *The Spanish Military Nun* on one occasion, "staggering, fainting, reeling."[7] The excess of individual motion in the *Dream Fugue* is not so much to be attributed to the preceding events of *The Glory of Motion,* as this latter title is to be taken as characteristic of something that runs throughout the lyric prose. The idea of visible motion is connected also with other bodily sensations mentioned later.[8]

Light, with its absence, or opposite, darkness, we have already noticed.[9] De Quincey often uses the word *light* simply, and without reference to its composition. But, as with this, and with the word *music,* so he is frequently contented with the mere word *colour.* He likes to employ the latter in figures: thus, in a critical paper, we read, "The meter raises the tone of colouring ..."[10] In descriptions, we need not expect so subjec-

[1] cf. XIII. 191, 212, 213, 219, 236, *M.*
[2] cf. XIII. 321 l 29, 367 l 6.
[3] I. 51.
[4] III. 284.
[5] XIII. 324.
[6] XIII. 320.
[7] XIII. 203.
[8] *D.* 79.
[9] *D.* 67.
[10] X. 172.

tive a person to search objective nature for her actual shades. If he becomes more exact, he still remains within his own circle. He associates childlike purity with white roses[1] and fleecy clouds.[2] The more sombre tints are rarer with him. He rejoices in the richer, such as *golden*, *crimson*, *purple*, *cerulean*.[3]

The eye, connected as it is with all the other sources of sensory impressions, stands in closest relation, perhaps, with the ear. If the *Dream Fugue* be read aloud, a direct influence may be observed, in the way, for instance, in which pitch and accent are affected by punctuation and the position of words. There is, however, another sort of more direct appeal to the ear, namely, *onomatopoeia*. How cunningly De Quincey could join meaning and sound, one observes probably best of all in *Savannah La Mar*; for example, in the passage where the Dark Interpreter discourses on the infinite divisibility of time and the incalculable minuteness of the real present, saying: "The time which *is* contracts into a mathematic point."[4] Such artifices are not uncommon in our author.[5] They are not, however, always readily separable from another set of phenomena in the prose poetry. We refer to its mere sonant quality, aside from evident imitation of sounds, as well as from the principle of repetition and variation, shortly to be touched on. This quality is produced by the preponderance of voiced speech-elements, as against voiceless, and by the predominance of those elements which render free the voice-stream, in comparison with those which impede and interrupt it, by the so-called vowels and semi-vowels more particularly. As seems to the present writer, this quality is very conveniently shown in the semi-vowels.[6] We have observed how open our author is to impressions from sounds. He

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[1] XIII 321.
[2] I. 47.
[3] cf. I. 47; X. 360.
[4] XIII 361.
[5] cf. XIII. 106 1 40.
[6] *D.* 16 etc.

himself calls attention to his captivation by names like Helvellyn, Blencathra, Glaramara, *Consul Romanus*.[1]

Besides this more general quality for the ear, this *residuum* after the usual poetical shifts are taken account of, there are to be considered these same conventional shifts, all such as depend upon variation and repetition of sounds. From repetition and variation in the stress and prolongation of sounds arises meter; out of repetition and variation of the sounds themselves come assonance and alliteration. Meter De Quincey purposely disregards, at least to a large extent. Portions here and there of the prose poetry will scan, and very natural it is for Masson to suppose that our author was conscious of such effects.[2] But what De Quincey continually employs in his lyric is prose cadence. This is a thing that almost defies analysis. It depends too much upon the meaning, and therefore changes with far too great freedom, to allow of any representation like that of a scheme of meter.[3]

Unhampered by metrical restrictions, our author is all the more free to adorn his style with assonance and alliteration. If we wish to understand one of the main features of his art, we must examine the nature of these elements a little closely. There is no generic difference between them. Both are based upon the principle of repetition and variation; that is, both consist in a repetition of the same or similar sounds, with intervening less determined sounds. In the title *Burke's Works* and the name of the poet, *John Donne*, combinations so offensive to De Quincey's ear,[4] there are not enough varying sounds. Assonance is usually considered a repetition of the same vowel sound, especially in syllables prominent through accent or length; alliteration, a repetition of the same consonant, especially, or even exclusively, at the beginning of syllables. Any two vowels, however, at the beginning of respective

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[1] II. 230; III. 437; cf. III. 320; *L.* 479.
[2] XIII. 57—8 *M*; cf. Masson, *Essays* 423 (bibl. 47).
[3] cf. X. 129, 130; V. 228.
[4] II. 313.

syllables, are said to alliterate; though it would be quite as correct to maintain that in such position they produced assonance pure and simple. Still, if all vowels so placed alliterate, it may be supposed that any two consonants of the same order show a similar tendency, *t* to alliterate with *d*, *p* with *b*, etc., in forming which the organs of speech assume, in each case, similar positions. Repetition of like sounds at the end of syllables, the ordinary theory fails to notice, save in the isolated instance of verse-rime. Medial and final semivowels also seem to produce a sort of assonance, certainly when the same semivowel is repeated. At all events the lines must not be too sharply drawn.

Almost any of the lyric passages already cited will illustrate these principles in our author.[1] We need scarcely repeat any. De Quincey was conscious of the alliteration in his writings, and seems sometimes unable to avoid it.[2] In *Murder as One of the Fine Arts* there are many striking alliterating expressions, like "poor, panic-stricken man",[3] "flight of panic or in pursuit",[4] etc. In one place, already noted,[5] where the word *panic* appears four times within a page, in each of the three cases where it has a preceding adjective, this latter is drawn into alliteration with the stronger, characteristic word. Another instance, showing excellently the manner in which our author at times gave way to the power of stylistic ornament, occurs in *The Spanish Military Nun*: Kate finds it difficult, at one point in her journey, to guide her horse "with any precision through narrow episcopal paths." De Quincey is forced to explain the obscure word *episcopal* by a note to the effect that the roads in question were maintained by the bishop of Cuzco.[6]

Finally there could come under treatment the least direct appeals to the ear, cases wherein the mere names

[1] e. g. *D.* 14, 15.
[2] cf. III. 310.
[3] XIII. 100.
[4] XIII. 108.
[5] *D.* 66, note 2.
[6] XIII. 229.

of sounds or sound-producers would be given, representing the originals without any suggestion of similarity, simply through habitual mental association of names and things. Such terms can, however, be disregarded in interpreting the prose poems. Names are, for our author, either imitative, or else helpful to the general melody. Words like *organ*, *Te Deum*, *Sanctus*, *Hallelujah*, *trumpet* must always be thought of in one of these two relations.

The next senses, touch and taste, are little called into play. Of the latter there are a few isolated instances like that at the beginning of *Levana*: "... just as the infant tasted for the first time the atmosphere of our ... planet, it was laid on the ground."[1] *Sweet* used figuratively, i. e., applied to friendship, sound, etc., and *bitter*, to hate and the like, it would be hardly right to instance, even were they common. *Vintages* and *corymbi*[2] belong rather among our author's rare representations of stationary objects. Touch also seldom occurs. In the passage in *Savannah La Mar*, "together we touched the mighty organ-keys",[3] the sensation aroused is chiefly of the motion in passing. In any case, appeals to the senses of immediate contact are singularly, and yet most naturally, absent from the prose poetry, from the subjective expression of a shy and evasive nature.

Representations of smell are more frequent,[4] as, for example, in the favorite word *incense*. We have this twice in the *Dream Fugue*[5]; still in the second case as a *cloud* or *surge*, and so partly for the eye. The *tropical flowers*[6] also stir more particularly the latter organ.

For the sense of temperature we discover a limited circle of describing words considerably repeated, a circle largely governed by the principle of contrast.

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[1] XIII. 362.
[2] XIII. 319, 361.
[3] XIII. 360.
[4] e. g. XIII. 107 1 1.
[5] XIII. 319, 326.
[6] XIII. 225.

With *sunlight* is connected the idea of moderate warmth, but also of extreme noon-day heat. On the other hand, the conception of *frost* is one of the commonest in our author. He puts it to figurative uses very often: e. g., "We men and our horses, with their fiery fore-legs rising in mid air to their everlasting gallop, were frozen to a bas-relief."[1] The idea of cold is, however, by no means lost. On the side of heat are other expressions such as *fiery crests*,[2] *fiery font*,[3] and so on; that is, in the *Dream Fugue*. With them we may compare the passage in *Levana*, "... scorch the fountains of tears; ... So shall he be accomplished in the furnace."[4] Once more we find our author rich in one way, restricted in another: frequent and rather powerful in his appeals to the sense in question, but remaining always within definite boundaries. In this case again the sensations are habitually interwound with other sorts; frost suggests what is white, suggests death, etc.; fiery, likewise, has the attribute of color as well as that of heat.

Similarly, the idea of warmth, animal and mechanical, is associated in the "impassioned prose" with that of motion. The latter conception, as we have observed,[5] comes to De Quincey, not merely through the avenue of sight. It has also a relation to the muscular and the internal organic sense of locomotion. Even with the exclamations, *Lo!* and *Behold!* not rare with our author,[6] one perceives that a bodily turning is suggested. The sensations in question are aroused with great frequency in the prose poetry. De Quincey is more abounding, perhaps, in suggestions of motion, both to the eye and to the sense under consideration, than in any other kind. Thus, at the end of the second part of the *Mail-Coach*: "— suddenly ... leaped upon her, with the flashing of cataracts, Death, the crowned

[1] XIII. 325.
[2] XIII. 320.
[3] XIII. 326.
[4] XIII. 369.
[5] cf. *D*. 73.
[6] cf. XIII. 319, 325, 326, etc.

phantom, with ... the tiger roar of his voice."[1] References to animals are chiefly concerned with their movements: the comparison of death to a leaping tiger finds a parallel in *Levana*, where the youngest sister of sorrow is said to move "with incalculable motions, bounding, and with tiger's leaps."[2]

From the class of sensations just considered, we pass naturally to another set, closely connected. De Quincey's writings are full of appeals to a sort of indefinite bodily consciousness, conglomerate of involuntary processes and habitual functions. Our author has, for example, numerous expressions relating to the circulatory system. Characteristic with him are the compounds *heart-shattering* and *heart-shaking*.[3] He employs, too, the medical terms *systole* and *diastole* in various connections,[4] e. g., in illustration of the history of literary movements. We notice also expressions like the following from the *Dream Fugue*: "the seals were taken off all pulses; life, and the frenzy of life, tore into their channels again."[5] In the same general category belongs a number of residual sensations, such as those connected with the agitations and tumults that become so frequent whenever there is an approach to the higher, lyric key; also the references to general bodily well-being and discomfort, a part of those to the effects of heat and cold, and finally the bodily sensations that accompany emotions. The refrain of the *Dream Fugue* illustrates well the part which anomalous sensations play in our author, and may perhaps make clear the way in which he unites visible motion with flutterings, tremblings, and conceptions of other processes less external and more difficult to analyse.[6]

Let so much, then, suffice to show the relation of the prose poems to the sense-complex. One sees easily

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[1] XIII. 318.
[2] XIII. 368.
[3] XIII. 90, 272, *D.* 49.
[4] XIII. 280 etc.
[5] XIII. 325; cf. XIII. 132, 365; X. 393.
[6] cf. *D.* 49, 50.

with what limitations the term sensuous may be applied to De Quincey's third order of writings. Certainly there is evidence how unwarranted is any opinion that the "impassioned prose" of our author is addressed overwhelmingly to any one sense; that, for example, "he aimed deliberately at the construction of language that should charm the ear without consideration of its meaning."[1] If there is a preponderance of one sort of appeals over the rest, it is in favor of those made to the sensations of motion.

[1] R. B. Johnson, Lyrics in Prose by De Q. Preface, p. VII (bibl. 39).

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